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**NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY**  
**JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE**  
**JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL**



PROSPECTUS: Keeping Kim; How the Kim Conundrum Best Serves American Interests in the Asia Pacific

by

**Erik E. Hilberg**

*Lieutenant Colonel, United States Army*



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KEEPING KIM; HOW THE KIM CONUNDRUM BEST SERVES AMERICAN INTERESTS  
IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

By

Erik E. Hilberg

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

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## Abstract

Is the United States solving the wrong problem in the Asia Pacific? The US is at a fork in the road regarding a nuclear-armed DPRK. This analysis answers the question whether the US or PRC benefits the most by the Kim Regime remaining in power. The analysis found that the US gains the most by the Kim Regime remaining in place. Additionally, it found that the PRC potentially benefits the most post-reunification and post-removal of DPRK threats to the region. The research also identified the DPRK as a current nuclear power state which the US, ROK, PRC, and Japan are now forced to manage, not prevent. The nuclear deterrence provided by the stability-instability paradox was viewed as a critical element of DPRK ambitions to deter the US while preserving the Kim Regime. U.S. force posture in the Asia Pacific was identified as a critical element for the achievement of long-term goals in the region. The research deemed that U.S. force posture in the Asia Pacific limits PRC attainment of hegemon status in the region. Additionally, U.S. force posture was identified as being at risk in all scenarios involving Korean Peninsula reunification, whether via peace or war. U.S. National interests, policy, and strategy were reviewed in this research. Ways of Seeing, SWOT Analysis (Strength, Weaknesses, Theaters, and Opportunities), and Design Theory were primary methods for the research. Particular focus was placed on US security posture in the Asia Pacific Region and how it may look in the future.



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## **Part I. Defining the Environmental Frame**

### **Keeping Kim; How the Kim Conundrum Best Serves American Interests in the Asia Pacific**

Presently, the United States (US) expends great diplomatic and military effort within the Asia Pacific Region focuses on the Korean Peninsula and the challenges presented by a nuclear-armed Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The US's "Pivot to the Pacific" is rather ambiguous leaving many nations to wonder what the US considers its national interests in the region.<sup>1</sup> There are two distinct problems to grapple with when dealing with the DPRK and the People's Republic of China (PRC). This is the fork in the road, or decision point, the United States has reached as the DPRK closes the ability gap to create nuclear-armed warheads. First, should the US focus on maintenance of the armistice on the Korean Peninsula or focus its efforts on dismantling the DPRK's nuclear program? The dismantling could occur via deterrence or potentially by force. Second, how does the US compete militarily and economically with the PRC, which has experienced exponential growth over the past twenty-five years while simultaneously administering a significant modernization of their armed forces? The two problems are different, yet highly related. They have unintended consequences upon one another that are likely to cause long-term problems. Most importantly, they have significant potential effects on future security posture within the region.

When freeing oneself from bias and aversions, while examining the conundrum the Korean Peninsula poses from an alternative perspective, it may prove that enabling scenarios

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<sup>1</sup> Kurt Campbell and Robert Kagan, "The Obama Administration's Pivot to Asia," The Foreign Policy Initiative, December 13, 2011. <http://www.foreignpolicyi.org/content/obama-administrations-pivot-asia> (accessed 01/08/2017, 2017).



which keep the Kim Regime in power best serves the interest of the US. Additionally, this scenario may limit potential threats to security from the PRC. Security posture is the key issue with both challenges. Security posture is the way a nation maintains its strategic ends such as presence, expansionist basing, operational reach, agreements, and deterrence, within a region. The security posture of the US in the Asia Pacific Region has hidden connections and significant long-term risks, posed by the Kim Conundrum. Would Korean unification, whether peaceful or by war, lead to an eventual reduction of U.S. force posture from what is currently the Republic of Korea (ROK)? Could this then lead to a reduction of U.S. force posture in Japan? This may sound akin to the domino theory of the 1960s. However, imagine the benefits this scenario provides to a rising PRC who is looking to expand their influence in the region. This expansion is occurring via economics and territorial disputes in the region.

Although many would see Korean unification as a tremendous win, over seventy years in the making, at the end of the event the United States may find itself less able to compete with the PRC in the Asia Pacific Region. The PRC is clearly a rising power, the scenario presented by reunification may diminish the US's ability to react to aggression in the region due to a lack of operational reach resulting from post-reunification changes in security posture. This scenario begs the question, has the PRC figured this out and are they now acting on that knowledge? Over the past five years, the world has witnessed, for the first time, PRC approval of sanctions against the DPRK. For the first time, the world has seen the PRC take several non-supportive stances against their communist neighbor and ally.

This perceived change in strategy occurs at a time when the PRC, a rapidly rising power, is demonstrating a more aggressive posture throughout the Asia Pacific Region. A key element of this change is how the PRC is feverishly expanding its borders in the South China Sea's



Spratly Islands by placing sand over reefs to claim disputed territories via physical possession.<sup>2</sup> These islands are of vital interest to the global economy. They are on the navigational approach to the Strait of Malacca. “One-third of world trade and half of its oil and gas pass thru the waters.”<sup>3</sup> The PRC’s buildup along the Fiery Cross Reef and Mischief Reef clearly involves the building national power via militarization of the area.<sup>4</sup> The area is vital to the PRC since over eighty percent of its energy imports pass thru the Strait of Malacca.<sup>5</sup> The buildup has more to it than simply regaining the honor associated with reclaiming lost pieces of China’s empire. If the PRC militarizes these islands, it can threaten freedom of navigation thru the strait without having to build a navy that could compete with the US. Additionally, the PRC could block the naval shipping and trade of all nations east of the strait. This includes Japan (world’s 3<sup>rd</sup> largest economy), the ROK, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Vietnam. This combined with the PRC’s One Belt One Road Initiative could critically shift the balance of power in the region. The PRC’s One Belt One Road Initiative is a massive diplomatic and economic development to connect Asia and Europe with roads, railways, pipelines, and data cables.

If the PRC restricted the flow of trade thru the Strait of Malacca while leading the One Belt One Road Initiative, it could find itself controlling nearly all imports and exports in the Asia Pacific. They may never execute such an evil deed; however, is the world comfortable with one nation holding all the cards in a high stakes poker game? Below is an image depicting territorial

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<sup>2</sup> South China Morning Post, “**China Builds New Military Facilities on South China Sea Islands, Says US Think Tank**,” *South China Morning Post*, sec. 2017, June 30, 2017, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Sheldon W. Simon, “Conflict and Diplomacy in the South China Sea,” *Asian Survey* 52, no. 6 (November/December 2012, 2012), 998 (accessed 11/30/2017).

<sup>4</sup> South China Morning Post.

<sup>5</sup> China Power Team, “How Much Trade Transits the South China Sea?” Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 27, 2017. <https://chinapower.csis.org/much-trade-transits-south-china-sea/> (accessed 01/05/2017, 2017).



disputes in the South China Sea.<sup>6</sup>



This graphic also highlights the geostrategic importance of disputed islands and reefs in the region. Additionally, when examining the geographical location of Taiwan, one can quickly see how it can serve as an obstacle to the PRC's regional expansion efforts.

<sup>6</sup> Scott Neumann. "Little Islands Are Big Trouble In The South China Sea." Digital image. Little Islands Are Big Trouble In The South China Sea. September 7, 2012. Accessed November 1, 2017. <http://www.npr.org/2012/09/07/160745930/little-islands-are-big-trouble-in-the-south-china-sea>.



## **Chapter 1. Today's Geostrategic and Geopolitical Environment – The Game of Thresholds**

Since the end of the Cold War significant changes emerged in the strategic environment. These changes to the strategic environment significantly improved the PRC's well-being while simultaneously further alienating the DPRK. At the end of the Cold War a game of thresholds emerged where warfare remains limited and under the threshold of absolute war.

An environment of political warfare consisting of constant competition, asymmetric warfare, and insurgencies characterizes the emergence of this change. George Kennan described political warfare as "political force" in part five of his 1948 Long Telegram.<sup>7</sup> Later in 1948, Kennan and the US Department of State refined the definition of political warfare as the "logical application of Clausewitz's doctrine in a time of peace. In its broadest definition, political warfare is the employment of all the means at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives."<sup>8</sup> The emergence of political warfare combined with the desire to remain under three distinct thresholds limits the escalation of conflict from warfare to absolute war. State and non-state actors are respecting the following thresholds since the end of the Cold War. They are 1) to stay under the threshold of a nuclear attack when dealing with a nuclear-armed state, 2) to stay under the threshold of a large-scale conventional attack when overmatched, and 3) to utilize asymmetric and political warfare to compete at a level below the threshold of conflict between two or more nation states.

This is a significant departure from the absolute form of industrialized war that characterized the first half of the twentieth century. This era ended after World War II despite a

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<sup>7</sup> The US Department of State, "Policy Planning Staff Memorandum 269." The US Department of State, May 14, 1948. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945-50Intel/d269>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



brief comeback during the Gulf War. The Gulf War was an anomaly and the final confirmation to the world not to ever challenge the US in conventional warfare on an open battlefield. The war served as a significant learning experience for the PRC and DPRK, which altered their strategies as they compete with the US.

The Cold War was an era characterized by the threat of nuclear warfare and it defined the second half of the twentieth century. The threat of nuclear annihilation created the emergence of Cold War peripheral conflicts. The devastation that occurred on the Korea Peninsula from 1950 to 1953 was the most significant of those conflicts.

The end of the Cold War created a shift from a bipolar world order, which was led by the US and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The US found itself for a brief period as the leader of the unipolar world order after the collapse of the USSR in 1991. The change in world order led to the exposure of many failing states with deeply rooted internal instability.

Subsequently the world is experiencing a rise in intrastate conflict amongst unrecognized nations or groups of people, who often do not identify themselves as part of an internationally recognized sovereign state, within which they are located. For the purpose of this thesis large groups of unrecognized and unrepresented populations residing within one or more sovereign states are referred to as nations of people. Sovereign and internationally recognized nation states are referred to as states. Today many nations of people are realizing their lack of representation at a time where the world is simultaneously experiencing a significant decrease in interstate conflicts.<sup>9</sup> A source of the instability is the reluctance of U.S. and other major powers to develop a clear grand strategy which addresses changes in the conduct of warfare. Additionally, the PRC

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<sup>9</sup> Center for Systemic Peace, "**Assessing the Qualities of Systemic Peace**," Center for Systemic Peace, <http://www.systemicpeace.org/conflictrends.html> (accessed 01/05/2017, 2017).



has numerous border disputes and nations of disempowered people within its territory which generates significant intrastate turmoil and the requirement for large investment in an internal security apparatus. Later this thesis examines how the development of their One Belt One Road Initiative is likely to cause the exposure of several of these fault lines.

The Cold War concluded in conjunction with a period of mass globalization where the world is getting smaller, more connected, and far more interdependent. This global interdependence is lessening the number of interstate conflicts. Deng Xiaoping connected what was once a closed and isolated China to the globalized economies of the world at a rather opportune time. Imagine what might have been the outcome of globalization not occurring, with the USSR collapsing, the DPRK suffering from famine, and the PRC still reeling from Tiananmen in the early 1990s. This might have emboldened Taiwan to push harder for independence, or for the ROK to destabilize the Kim Regime and seek a rapid reunification.

When competition and conflicts involve nuclear-armed powers, all parties tend to respect the stability-instability paradox. The paradox is an international relations theory regarding the effect of multiple states possessing nuclear weapons capability and the subsequent threat of mutually assured destruction.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, the paradox posits that when more than one country attains nuclear status the probability of a direct conflict will decrease. However, a subsequent increase in indirect conflicts is likely to occur. This increase in smaller scale conflicts reflects the effort to remain under the nuclear threshold. The paradox changed slightly after the Cold War. The key is not just having the biggest arsenal, but to simply possess a minimal capability, which deters adversaries from crossing the nuclear threshold.

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<sup>10</sup> Michael Krepon, "The Stability-Instability Paradox, Misperception, and Escalation Control in South Asia," *Prospects for Peace in South Asia* (2003), December 01, 2005, 261.



Today eight nations have acknowledged they possess nuclear weapons. The US and PRC are two of the five nuclear nations to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.<sup>11</sup> Since the end of the Cold War, Pakistan and North Korea achieved nuclear-armed status. Additionally, Iran appears to be close to possessing nuclear weapons. The perceived stability of new nuclear states is far less than that of traditional members such as the US, Russia, United Kingdom, France, India, and the PRC.

Becoming a nuclear-armed state and crossing the threshold of nuclear power status greatly enhances stability for new members due to the paradox providing enhanced deterrence with the undesired potential result of mutual destruction. The challenge is peacefully joining the club while remaining under the first threshold of nuclear attack and the second threshold of large scale conventional attack. When a state achieves nuclear status, it achieves a security blanket through two forms of deterrence. First, parity with other nuclear-armed states yields the stability-instability-paradox. Second, possession of such capability deters non-nuclear states from crossing a threshold where they would trigger an absolute response from a nuclear-armed state. Nuclear-armed states produce unique circumstances where the potential for global destruction results in increases in limited warfare. This phenomenon represents the predominant form of Cold War conflict and it is influencing post-Cold War conflict in an increased manner due to nuclear proliferation.<sup>12</sup>

The deterrence provided by the stability-instability-paradox is exactly what the DPRK is seeking to achieve with their nuclear weapons program. In the 1990s, the DPRK utilized the

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<sup>11</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), "**Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)**," United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), May 11, 1995. <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/> (accessed 10/31/2017, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Antulio J. Echevarria, *Reconsidering the American Way of War; US Military Practice from the Revolution to Afghanistan*, Georgetown University Press, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wpm06>.



Agreed Framework in conjunction with their elements of national power to buy time and space enabling the development of a clandestine nuclear program.<sup>13</sup> This may be what Iran is doing today with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The DPRK created the framework for pariah nations to gain significantly from the threat or attempt to achieve nuclear status while still engaging in additional forms of political warfare. Simply making progress towards joining the nuclear club can create a threat that enables pariah nations to siphon aid from other nuclear-armed powers. This is clearly the case with Iran and North Korea with their receipt of international aid in the form of the JCPOA and Agreed Framework.

The second threshold of avoiding a large-scale conventional attack when overmatched clearly has causal linkage to globalization. The globalized environment is one where nations engage in intense political and economic competition below the threshold of conventional warfare. This competition involves utilization of all the elements of national power a nation can muster in a simultaneous and coordinated manner. This is exactly the process that George Kennan described as “political warfare” in his 1946 Long Telegram. The PRC and Russia are modern examples of states that execute this model as they compete politically and economically. This is akin to the PRC’s strategy of “Unrestricted Warfare,” which is a comprehensive form of nation state led political warfare.<sup>14</sup>

An abundance of nations, international organizations, and scholars concur that the DPRK is today’s greatest threat to world order in the Asia Pacific Region. U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis recently stated that, “North Korea's efforts to develop its nuclear weapons program now

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<sup>13</sup> Walter Diamana, "Iran's Deterrence Power: The Nuclear Agenda," International Policy Digest, June 10, 2015. <https://intpolicydigest.org/2015/06/10/iran-s-deterrence-power-the-nuclear-agenda/> (accessed 11/16/2017, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, "Unrestricted Warfare" Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House), 1999 (accessed 10/30/2017).



make it the greatest threat to the U.S. and international security.”<sup>15</sup> The DPRK is a textbook example of the three thresholds (nuclear, conventional, and competing below threshold of violence), the stability-instability paradox, and the effects of the shift from a bipolar world order. The DPRK is clearly trying to attain nuclear weapons to achieve regime stability by deterring the US and the Republic of Korea from attacking a nuclear-armed state. The DPRK routinely executes political warfare with the US and ROK using asymmetric means such as cyber warfare and small-scale attacks that are often not internationally recognized as attributable to the DPRK. The DPRK was a client state of the former USSR that lost a large portion of their security umbrella due to the shift to a multipolar world order.

The third threshold of utilizing asymmetric and political warfare to compete at a level below the threshold of conflict between two or more nation states is the most emergent of the three thresholds since the end of the Cold War. Three models define this threshold. They are 1) the utilization of a hybrid-proxy model where large states donate uniformed “volunteers” to stay under thresholds of response by other states and international organizations, 2) execution of insurgencies within one or more failing states to create favorable opportunities within existing power vacuums, and 3) the execution of unrestricted warfare. Later when analyzing the PRC’s national interests, policy, and strategy, this thesis will delve into their concept of Unrestricted Warfare and how it follows two of the asymmetric models.

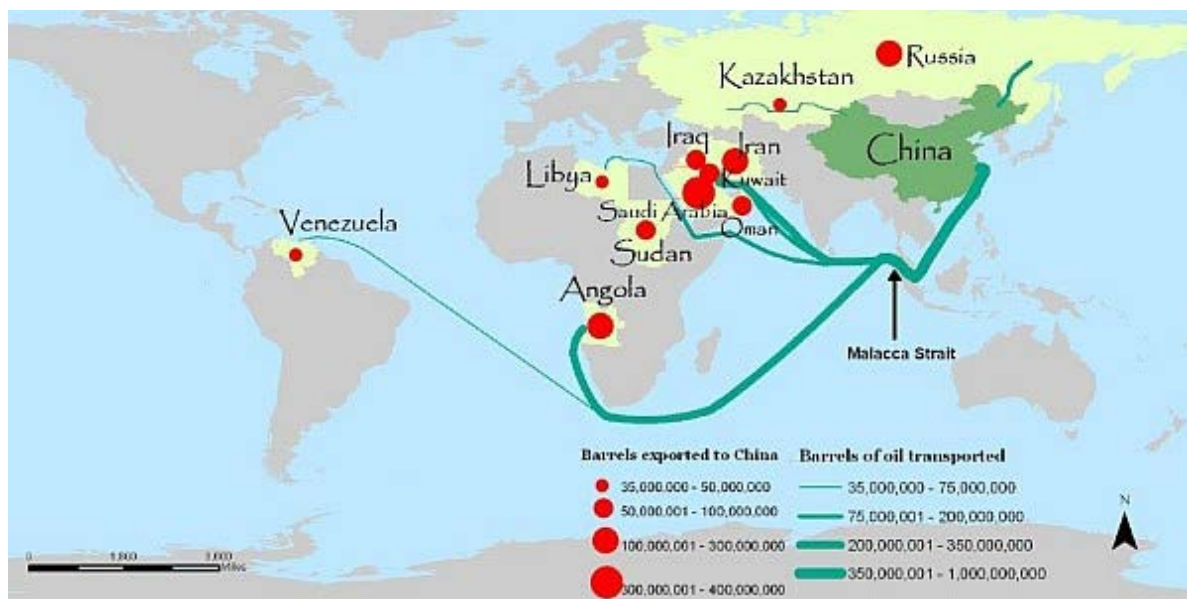
The emergence of Islamic fundamentalism demonstrates the asymmetric preferences of nations of people who see opportunities to make gains because of power voids in the current multipolar world order. From an outsider’s perspective, one may suppose that the conflicts in the

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<sup>15</sup> Paul D. Shinkman, "Defense Chief: North Korea the Greatest Threat to the US," US News & World Report, June 12, 2017. <https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2017-06-12/north-korea-poses-greatest-threat-to-the-us-defense-secretary-jim-mattis-says> (accessed 10/30/2017, 2017).



Middle East have no effect on China. However, when considering that the PRC imports over 60% of its energy (estimates have it trending towards 70%), that the PRC is the fastest growing segment of the automotive industry, and that it is highly reliant on an export economy, one can then gain an appreciation of causal links tying the PRC to the Middle East.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, experts assess that over 80% of the PRC's energy imports transit thru the Strait of Malacca where the largest Muslim population on the planet resides within the nation of Indonesia.<sup>17</sup>



Unrestricted Warfare is another form of emergent warfare. In 1999 two Colonels from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China wrote a book titled *Unrestricted Warfare*.<sup>18</sup> This is akin to political warfare; however, it recommends tailoring the PLA's effort to counter the overmatch in conventional strength possessed by the US. The book touts the domains of law,

<sup>16</sup> Irina Slav, "China's Oil Import Dependency Deepens," Oilprice.com, January 13, 2017. <https://oilprice.com/Latest-Energy-News/World-News/Chinas-Oil-Import-Dependency-Deepens.html> (accessed 10/31/2017, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> Marc Lanteigne, "China's Maritime Security and the 'Malacca Dilemma,'" *Asian Security* 4, no. 2 (06, 2008), 150, <https://nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=31768173&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

<sup>18</sup> Liang and Xiangsui, "Unrestricted Warfare."



economics, networks, and terrorism as growth industries where the PLA can achieve the maximum returns on investment.<sup>19</sup>

The Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) stoking of the PRC's political and historical narrative that their "Century of Humiliation...at the hands of the West" has ended, combined with the PRC's exponential growth, and a substantially lower military investment than the U.S. further signifies the end of absolute war.<sup>20</sup> The PRC's focus on political warfare and attacking great powers through a diligent assessment of critical vulnerabilities combined with an analysis of asymmetric means to attack them highlights the changing nature of war. For the US, this is an unintended consequence of winning the Cold War, serving as the most powerful nation in a multipolar world order, and holding the bulk of the planet's military might. The U.S.'s capitalist model utilizes an open competition through a free and open system of markets to generate the elements of national power; the PRC's model involves the unrestricted use of statecraft when entering open markets to achieve their ends.

The conduct of war has transitioned from absolute war to limited warfare with a propensity to remain below the threshold of war due to changes in the strategic environment. The three thresholds represent the emergence of political warfare in the multipolar world order combined with the desire to not escalate above thresholds which include the immense human and political costs of the twentieth century's absolute form of war.

The conduct of warfare continues to evolve in limited forms with several factors driving change. Three distinct phenomena occurred since the end of the Cold War that are catalyzing the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Allison A. Kaufman, Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *The "Century of Humiliation" and China's National Narratives*, Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission Hearing on "China's Narratives Regarding National Security Policy" sess., 2011, <https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/3.10.11Kaufman.pdf> (accessed 10/30/2017), 3.



change. They are the simultaneous shift to a multipolar world order, globalization, and the rising influential power of non-governmental organizations and institutions.

Non-state actors such as the United Nations (UN), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations(ASEAN), and multi-national corporations with GDPs larger than many nations, are reducing the power of the nation state while increasing interdependence. The decline of the nation state, globalization, and the subsequent rise of marginalized unrecognized nations of people is transitioning conflict from its traditional interstate form to conflicts that are often intrastate in nature. For the purpose of this thesis large groups of unrecognized and unrepresented populations residing within one or more sovereign states are referred to as nations of people. Sovereign and internationally recognized nation states are referred to as states.

Clearly, nations such as the US require a grand strategy to counter the emergence of limited warfare that aids failed states and marginalized nations of people when commensurate with national interests. Not having a strategy allows emergence to occur in a chaotic manner. Design Theory provides a framework which allows one to understand complex phenomena. Additionally, it can influence how nations shape the environment in a constructive manner



## **Chapter 2. Design Theory**

The analysis of this thesis aims to examine whether the US is better or worse off with the DPRK's Kim Regime remaining in place. The previous chapter framed the geopolitical environment and the three thresholds that exist. After framing the environment, the next logical question is to ascertain whether the process is addressing the right problem. Design theory offers an excellent framework for such an endeavor. The three key outputs of Design Theory are the Environment Frame, the Problem Frame, and the Solution Space. Only after framing the environment, problem, and potential solutions can one truly appreciate the causality of decision-making. Reflective skepticism via design theory ensures strategists are addressing the right problem. This assures a state that it does not win all the tactical fighting only to be worse off strategically when the fog of war is no longer present.

The strength of design theory is that it assists in addressing problems that involve complex adaptive systems. These types of systems involve numerous dependent and independent variables that adapt causing emergence. Complex adaptive systems are open systems that change as they receive feedback. Closed systems tend to be complicated systems such as an automobile engine that are engineered to remain in a state of stasis based on the receipt of negative feedback. These systems typically stop running or functioning when they receive positive feedback.

The previous chapter framed an overview of the strategic environment with a focus on the Asia Pacific Region. This serves as the Environmental Frame. The next chapter analyzes the national interests, strategy, and policy of the primary nations effected by the continuing crisis on the Korean Peninsula, which generates the Problem Frame. Later in the thesis, the research analyzes the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with key nations in the Asia Pacific with direct links to the Korean Peninsula. This bounding of scale and scope, from



the Asia Pacific Region to the Korean Peninsula, ensures an understanding of the root causes of tensions while focusing on strategic level implications. This ensures the chaos of winning every tactical fight only to be in a worse geostrategic position after a potential conflict does not occur.

Considering the process that led to the invasion of Iraq and then move forward fifteen years later, it is clear now that the US unsuspectingly weakened its position in the region. Saudi Arabia, the US's key ally in the region, saw its power and influence in the region weakened as well. At the same time the US inadvertently empowered its true adversary in the region, the Islamist Republic of Iran, which is now realizing their greatest level of modern day influence on the Arabian Peninsula. The great source of frustration from this development, is that it all occurred despite tremendous tactical success by the US as it executed Operation Iraqi Freedom. If US strategists fail to frame their analysis of the Korean Peninsula with geostrategic implications thoroughly considered, the US could find itself in a weakened future position throughout the Pacific Region, despite the reunification of the Korean Peninsula. The essential point is that strategic ends must always drive ways and means. This is akin to Prussian theorist Carl von Clausewitz's maxim that "war has its own grammar, but not its own logic."<sup>21</sup> It is a timeless lesson that political ends must drive ways and means.

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<sup>21</sup> Carl Von Clausewitz, Peter Paret and Michael Eliot Howard, *On War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 605, <https://nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=390520&site=eds-live&scope=site>.



## **Part II – The Problem Frame (The Fork in the Road) – Deal with a Nuclear-Armed DPRK or Reunify via Peace or War**

### **Chapter 1. US National Interests, Policy, and Strategy**

The US has four enduring national interests. Since the nation's inception these interests have remained relatively constant. The National Security Strategies of 2017 defined those interests as:<sup>22</sup>

- Protect the American People, the Homeland, and the American Way of Life, the security of the United States, its citizens, and U.S. allies and partners;
- Promote American Prosperity
- Preserve Peace through Strength
- Advance American Influence

Although US national interests are enduring the application of power to enforce those interests is a constant source of debate. There is a ubiquitous tension between the origins of US culture and national interests. As the world's preeminent military superpower, US strategic culture must evolve to a point where it can balance the tension that results from the nation's desire for prosperity and its desire to project democratic freedoms abroad.

The liberalist values of natural rights shaped the beginnings of the US's strategic culture. The Declaration of Independence is the seed from which US strategic culture burgeoned. The principles of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness historically influenced how the US

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<sup>22</sup> The Trump Administration, "2017 National Security Strategy," The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf> (accessed 12/27/2017, 2017).



developed national strategy and they derive from John Locke's work on natural rights.<sup>23</sup> The principles also represent the tension found today when developing strategies driven by national interests. Today, the US finds itself as the world leader both militarily and financially, in an ever-shrinking globalized world.

In the late 1800s, the US experienced a significant change in strategy when it went to war with Spain. The nation veered from its core liberalist principles, by exercising principles of realism, through the expansion of empire to gain power and resources. When the US won the Spanish American War, it found itself for the first time as a colony holder with possessions scattered throughout the planet. This departure from the nation's inward focus on North America highlights the friction between the principles of liberalism and realism.

Despite the economic benefits of acquiring the former Spanish colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam, the US was reluctant to empire build thru oppressive colonization. The US briefly trifled with expansion and self-interests only to turn back to its liberalist ideals. This friction created a polarizing effect on the U.S. population regarding when and how to employ the military instrument of national power which was highly evident prior to entering World War I, World War II, and it still exists today. The US consistently verbalizes the ideal of supporting the basic freedoms of all the world's citizens yet finds itself conflicted with its internal desire to prosper.

Shortly after WWII, the US found itself as one of two world powers, and the leader of the free world. The experience of two world wars caused a significant change in the nation's strategic culture. Due to the threat of communism and malign Soviet Union activities, the nation

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<sup>23</sup> Alexander Hamilton and others, "The Federalist Papers," FedBooks, <http://www.foundingfathers.info/federalistpapers/> (accessed 9/19/2017, 2017).



adopted a containment strategy. Additionally, the nation pledged to assist any nation seeking democracy and a responsibility to aid those oppressed by malevolent nations.<sup>24</sup> The Truman Doctrine and John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address codified this shift in policy.<sup>25</sup> The US experienced a major transition where it was now directly projecting its values and democracy globally. The US entered this role with limited diplomatic experience as a world power. The containment strategy was a compromise between the liberalist principles of basic rights and realism's principles of prosperity, which were evident in the US's goal of limiting the growth of the Soviet Union.

The collapse of the Soviet Union presented the US with a new challenge of being the lone superpower and possessor of the world's most capable military. This challenge often presents a "Catch 22" scenario where some welcome intervention and many more resent the intrusion of another nation's sovereignty. The result is a continuous debate over when to intervene with the military instrument of national power. The stability-instability-paradox serves as a catalyst accelerating the quantity of conflicts that occur, especially when combined with the shift to a multipolar world order and globalization.

Since 1781, the United States has declared war against eleven nations, over five actual theaters of war. During the same period, the US engaged in 280 smaller scale conflicts abroad, which is converse to its glorified view of strategic culture and absolute war.<sup>26</sup> The US worldview regarding the application of the military instrument of national power sees World War I, War II,

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<sup>24</sup> Harry Truman S., "The Truman Doctrine," US State Department, Office of the Historian, March 12, 1947. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/truman-doctrine> (accessed 9/20/2017, 2017).

<sup>25</sup> John F. Kennedy, "Inaugural Address of President John F. Kennedy," John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, January 20, 1961. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/Ready-Reference/JFK-Quotations/Inaugural-Address.aspx> (accessed 9/14/2017, 2017).

<sup>26</sup> Antulio J. Echevarria, *Reconsidering the American Way of War; US Military Practice from the Revolution to Afghanistan*, Georgetown University Press, (2014), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wpm06>.



and Desert Storm/Shield as an ideal form of war; which is absolute in its nature. This predominance of limited conflicts represents the dynamics of the first two thresholds examined earlier. The friction between the nation's prosperity and basic freedoms, first codified in the Declaration of Independence, continues to project an omnipresent and unresolved tension. The nation's unwillingness to realize its historical type of warfare is limited and below the threshold of absolute war, contributes to a strategic culture with tension regarding how to balance universal rights, prosperity, and world order. Those principles represent three of the four enduring national interests in the US's National Security Strategies of 2010, 2015, and 2017.

This is the crux of the Kim Conundrum, as well as the issue of Taiwan's sovereignty for the US. First, should the US liberate impoverished DPRK citizens as the world's lone superpower or should it respect the sovereignty of the DPRK and exercise restraint? Second, should the US defend Taiwan from an attack by the PRC? Is it in the U.S.'s national interest to defend an unrecognized nation of people wanting to create a democratic state free from the oppression of communism? These are two key policies that effect DPRK and PRC relations.

The US strategy in the Asia Pacific must consider the DPRK, Taiwan, and the Strait of Malacca as its top security challenges in the region. This level of focus, where the scale and scope centers on the region, not just the DPRK, while simultaneously examining the region's security posture, access to markets, and freedom of navigation aligns with three of the US's national interests. Part of the conundrum is the desire to intervene inside the DPRK on behalf of its oppressed citizens. This type of action would disrupt world order and potentially generate a response which crosses the nuclear threshold discussed earlier. Thru the lens of realism, one would look at the DPRK scenario as a local problem with strategic effects; however, tactical problems should never drive political ends. This is akin to the maxim of "not being able to see



the forest for the trees.”

In 2012, the Obama Administration announced a strategy where the US would pivot its attention toward the Pacific.<sup>27</sup> This was an ambiguous announcement since the shift in focus produced no specifics on what the pivot entailed regarding changes to US policy and strategy. The pivot led to the stationing of over sixty percent of the US Air Force and Navy in the Pacific. Additionally, the pivot led to the fielding of new technologies and equipment, such as the F-35, for their initial utilization within the Pacific.<sup>28</sup> The pivot did serve as a notice to the DPRK and PRC that the US was looking for stability and a balance of power in the region. This is occurring while the DPRK is feverishly seeking nuclear-armed status and while the PRC is realizing a rapid rise in regional influence; both situations are generating tension in the region.

A critical component to forming US strategy in the Asia Pacific and Korean Peninsula is force posture. The US has all five of its armed services present in the region. There are over 39,000 personnel stationed in Japan, over 23,000 in the Republic of Korea, and over 3,000 on Guam.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, the US has recently deployed significant capabilities to the region to deter the DPRK. That effort includes Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) systems, F-22 Raptors, and strategic bombers.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Campbell and Kagan, "The Obama Administration's Pivot to Asia," The Foreign Policy Initiative, December 13, 2011. <http://www.foreignpolicyi.org/content/obama-administrations-pivot-asia> (accessed 01/08/2017, 2017).

<sup>28</sup> Sam Legrone, "Work: Sixty Percent of U.S. Navy and Air Force Will Be Based in Pacific by 2020," US Naval Institute News, September 30, 2014. <https://news.usni.org/2014/09/30/work-sixty-percent-u-s-navy-air-force-will-based-pacific-2020> (accessed 03/13/2018).

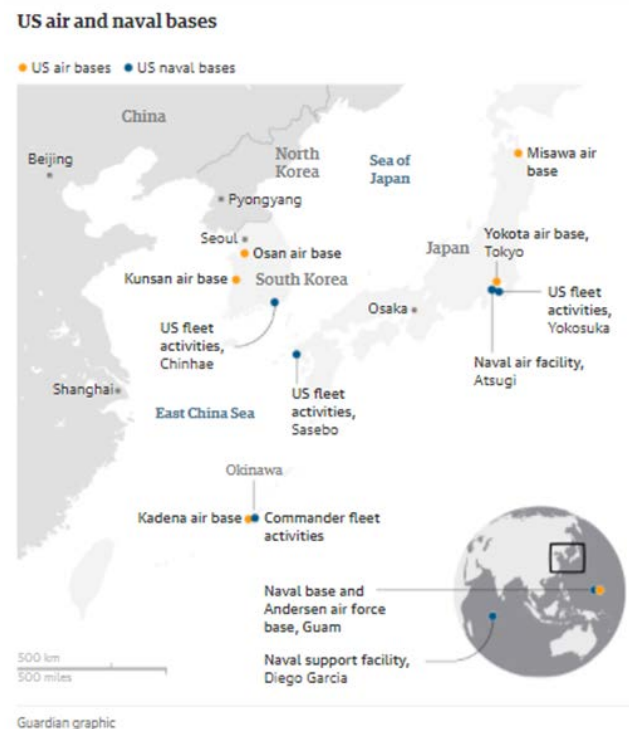
<sup>29</sup> Oliver Holmes, "What is the US Military's Presence Near North Korea?" The Guardian, August 09, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/aug/09/what-is-the-us-militarys-presence-in-south-east-asia> (accessed 11/01/2017, 2017).

<sup>30</sup> Franz-Stefan Gady, "US Deploys F-22 Stealth Fighters to South Korea to Deter Pyongyang," The Diplomat, February 17, 2016. <https://thediplomat.com/2016/02/us-deploys-f-22-stealth-fighters-to-south-korea-to-deter-pyongyang/> (accessed 01/06/2017, 2017).



Current US force posture in the Asia Pacific clearly ensures substantial operational reach. From the perspective of preserving national interests; especially the prosperity of the U.S. economic system, a decrease in force posture would shift the region's balance of power. This highlights why the Korean Peninsula is not the sole concern addressed by U.S. force posture in the Asia Pacific.

When looking at the graphic to the right, imagine trying to deter the PRC in the South China Sea or the Taiwan Strait without bases in Korea and Japan. After pondering that image, then consider the dilemma of Korean unification with an endstate where the US vacates the ROK on a permanent basis as part of an agreement to assuage PRC fears of a U.S. presence on their Korean border. Shortly thereafter, the US may depart its bases in Japan, either willingly or unwillingly, since the threat presented by the DPRK would no longer exist. In this scenario, the US could achieve its near-term gains on the Korean Peninsula, while subsequently handing over its influence in Taiwan and the South China Sea to the PRC overnight, with much smaller footprints in Australia, Diego Garcia, Guam, and Singapore serving as its last enduring presence in the Asia Pacific.



To sustain its current level of operational reach, the US would need to undertake significant investment elsewhere to make up for the loss of basing in the ROK and Japan. It is extremely important to note that it would now do so with nations who are not treaty partners. Further exacerbating the issue is the fact that the ROK pays fifty percent of the bill for US forces



stationed within its borders, it paid ninety-two percent of the cost to build the US's largest overseas base, Camp Humphreys.<sup>31</sup> The financials when examining Japan are even more beneficial for the US, the Japanese government pays \$2B annually, which is ninety percent of the total cost to maintain troops within its borders.

Below is a summary of US national interests, policies, and strategy:

	National Interests	Key Policies	Strategy
US	Security, prosperity, universal rights, world order	Deter aggression, defend ROK, defend Taiwan, Pacific pivot	Engage region, forward presence (basing), Joint exercises with ROK, Japan, and key regional nations

Using the Ways of Seeing model, below is a summary of the US's worldview:

How the US Sees Self	How US Sees ROK	How US Sees PRC	How US Sees DPRK
Preeminent superpower	Special partner	Rising power	Backwards, Hostile
Advocate for human rights	Open democracy	Competitor	Oppressive
Regional hegemon – earned via WWII & Korean War	Miracle on the Han is a shared success	Oppressive on human rights and free speech	Last frontier of communism
ROK & Miracle on the Han are evidence of success (US way of life)	An obligation to defend (Armistice)	Incredible trade partner; cheap goods (imports), over 1.3B export customers	Thorn in side (honor)
Must influence world order	Rightful leader of Korean Peninsula	Long-term partner despite post WWII hiccups	A threat to stability (fear & interests); increasingly dangerous
Pivoting towards Asia Pacific	Partner in security – US bases in ROK stabilize region	Seeking hegemon status; threat to financial system (World Bank, IMF)	Must be dealt with eventually, even if regime collapses
		The enduring source of the DPRK challenge	Possession of nuclear weapons crosses a significant threshold

<sup>31</sup> Ryan Browne, "Top general: Cheaper to keep troops in South Korea than U.S.," CNN, April 21, 2016. <https://www.cnn.com/2016/04/21/politics/trump-troops-korea-japan-cheaper-abroad/index.html> (accessed 03/13, 2018).



## Chapter 2. The Republic of Korea's National Interests, Policy, and Strategy

In 1953 the US (via the United Nations Command), the PRC, and the DPRK conducted a cessation of hostilities, at least on paper, when they signed the Korean Armistice Agreement. The agreement effectively ended open hostilities associated with the Korean War. Since that time, the ROK, DPRK, and US have continuously built up fortifications around the inter-Korean border which straddles the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. After the Korean War, the Korean Peninsula was effectively a war zone with few buildings, especially those above one story, remaining intact. The economies and livelihood of both countries suffered a complete destruction.

The digital boom of the past twenty years generated an enormous opportunity for the ROK and the position they achieved in consumer electronics, appliances, and automobile manufacturing is extremely impressive. Today the ROK is a world leader in ship building, is home to the world's largest shipyard, and the sixth busiest container port.<sup>32</sup> In the ROK, the transformation from 1953 to today is referred to as the "Miracle on the Han." The ROK, a small country, roughly the size of the state of Wyoming, now has the world's 11<sup>th</sup> largest economy.<sup>33</sup> The ROK now has a larger economy than Russia, a nation 170 times larger than the ROK in land mass, with a population nearly three times as large as the ROK's.

A key event that placed the ROK on the world stage was when they hosted the Summer Olympic Games in 1988. The games were a huge success. The ROK flourished afterwards due to wise investments in their infrastructure and electronics industries. Since then the ROK has hosted

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<sup>32</sup> Stephen Evans, "Heavy Metal: Life at the World's Largest Shipyard," BBC, May 30, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32811866> (accessed 11/01/2017, 2017).

Pieter Kinds, "The 10 Largest Container Ports in the World," Controlplay, July 14, 2016. <https://www.controlpay.com/blog/10-largest-container-ports-world> (accessed 11/01/2017, 2017).

<sup>33</sup> The World Bank, "GDP Ranking," The World Bank, January 16, 2018. <https://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/GDP-ranking-table> (accessed 02/15/2018, 2018).



the 2002 World Cup and the 2018 Winter Olympics.

The “Miracle of the Han” epitomizes Korean culture and what the ROK’s national interests aim to preserve. The ROK’s constitution asserts the following as their national interests:

- Security and prosperity of the Korean Nation
- Promotion of democracy, freedom, and human dignity
- Contribution to world peace
- Achievement of peaceful unification

The national interests of the ROK remain in a state of stasis despite tremendous economic growth and investment in the nation’s modernized armed forces. However, the execution of policy within the ROK has varied based on the ebbs and flow of their two-party presidential political system. ROK policy has consistently focused on reunification while exercising restraint and patience. The ebb and flow of ROK policy typically has ties to administrations with liberalist values seeking engagement with the DPRK and conservative administrations seeking to bolster defense due to DPRK aggression, which often manifests itself in the form of continual cross-border attacks. DPRK policy is often a polarizing issue in the ROK. Two party politics create changes to strategies on the peninsula via election cycles; however, no one wants war with the DPRK since it would be too costly, especially when considering the ROK’s sustained prosperity.

Kim Dae-jung’s “Sunshine Policy” was a key policy of engagement by the ROK towards DPRK from 1998 to 2008. In 2009 the ROK demonstrated a shift in policy to the right when they signed the Proliferation Security Initiative. Within a year of this shift, the DPRK sank a ROK corvette class vessel and shelled Yeonpyeong with nearly 200 artillery rounds.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Peter Foster, "North Korea Bombs South Korea's Yeonpyeong Island," The Telegraph, November 23. 2010. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/southkorea/8153000/North-Korea-bombs-South-Koreas-Yeonpyeong-Island.html> (accessed 01/05/2017, 2017).



A key initiative during the Sunshine Policy was The Kaesong Industrial Zone (KIZ). Created in 2002, the KIZ is a special administrative industrial region of the DPRK.<sup>35</sup> At the KIZ, ROK entrepreneurs worked with DPRK citizens who provided labor manufacturing clothing, textiles, auto parts, and semiconductors for over 120 companies.<sup>36</sup> The KIZ shut down in 2016 as tensions escalated between the DPRK and ROK. Continued nuclear tests by the DPRK were a significant source of this tension. This venture represents one of two major partnerships between the DPRK and ROK.

The second partnership is family reunions. The reunions occur occasionally with the first occurring in 1980. The Korean War ended nearly sixty-five years ago, adding urgency to the reunions since few citizens of either nation have many living relatives that were physically separated by the closure of the borders between the DPRK and ROK.

The strategy of the ROK on the Korean Peninsula is to maintain their vibrant economy while waiting for the right opportunity to reunify. Any form of reunification may be a burden the average ROK citizen is reluctant to accept based on the disparity in economic development and quality of life between the two nations.

Below is a summary of the ROK's national interests, policies, and strategy:

	National Interests	Key Policies	Strategy
<b>ROK</b>	Security and prosperity, promotion of democracy, world peace, reunification	Sunshine policy, KIZ cooperative, US basing and collective defense	Maintain status quo with DPRK, build large modernized military, heightened security posture, large investments in manufacturing, infrastructure, and transportation

<sup>35</sup> British Broadcast Company, "What is the Kaesong Industrial Complex?," BBC, February 10, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-22011178> (accessed 10/29/2017, 2017).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.



Using the Ways of Seeing model, below is a modeled summary of the ROK's worldview:

How the ROK Sees Self	How ROK Sees US	How ROK Sees PRC	How ROK sees DPRK
World Superpower	Special partner – usually have aligned interests	Rising power	Oppressive regime
Miracle on the Han partly enabled by US assistance	Leader of free world	Potential to be largest trading partner	Same ethnicity; different system of governance
Their time – their century	Partner in security – Significant US bases in ROK deter DPRK	Potential to be greatest competitor	Fellow Koreans are victims of Kim Regime
Happy with status quo regarding DPRK	US a source of tension in PRC relations	Enabler/supporter of DPRK	A threat to stability (fear & interests)
Technically at war with DPRK (Armistice); must show strength when attacked by DPRK	Suspicious of US – Japan relationship	Seeking regional hegemon status	Has to be dealt with eventually, no one has the political or economic capital to fix the issue
Economic powerhouse; Asia's rising star	Suspicious of US starting war with DPRK	Potential threat based on population, growth, and territorial claims	Time is distancing cultural & familial ties – generosity achieves limited effects
Shamed by Japanese occupation; drives animosity and distrust of Japan	Tremendous trade partner	Part of solution of problem with DPRK, inextricably linked	Possession of nuclear weapons crosses a significant threshold



### Chapter 3. The People's Republic of China's National Interests, Policy, and Strategy

The People's Republic of China is currently enjoying several decades of sustained growth. China's economy has emerged in an incredible manner when considering the size of the nation. "Since the country opened its doors in 1978...Its gross domestic product has surged from less than \$150 billion in 1978 to \$8,227 billion in 2012. In the process, more than 600 million people have escaped poverty."<sup>37</sup> Over that same period, PRC military spending has remained steady at close to two percent of GDP; however that represents an exponential amount of growth since the year 2000; especially when considering the PRC's economy grew at over 12% for several years.<sup>38</sup> This all occurred while the PRC, a communist nation, transitioned towards "socialism with Chinese characteristics."<sup>39</sup> The PRC's four stated national interests are:<sup>40</sup>

- Maintenance of Chinese Communist Party Rule
- Issues related to sovereignty and territory
- Sustainable economic development
- Social Stability (National Reunification)

In 1950 the PRC entered the Korean War at a time where they had recently driven Chinese Nationalists to Taiwan and were consolidating their communist foothold on the mainland. "The internal security and authority of the regime was under threat by various acts of sabotage undertaken by remaining Kuomintang (KMT) agents."<sup>41</sup> Many consider their entry into

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<sup>37</sup> Mark Purdy, "China's Economy, in Six Charts," Harvard Business Review, November 29, 2013. <https://hbr.org/2013/11/chinas-economy-in-six-charts> (accessed 10/31/2017, 2017).

<sup>38</sup> Peter Robertson, "China's Military Spending: Is there a New Arms race?" The Conversation, March 06, 2014. <http://theconversation.com/chinas-military-spending-is-there-a-new-arms-race-24030> (accessed 10/31/2017, 2017).

<sup>39</sup> Xi Jinping, "Xi Jinping's Address to the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China," September 09, 2016. [http://cpcchina.chinadaily.com.cn/2010-09/16/content\\_13918113.htm](http://cpcchina.chinadaily.com.cn/2010-09/16/content_13918113.htm) (accessed 11/01/2017).

<sup>40</sup> An Gang, "The Core of the Issue - China's Declaration of its Key Interests Misinterpreted by Many " Beijing Review, August 26, 2013. [http://www.bjreview.com.cn/world/txt/2013-08/26/content\\_563009.htm](http://www.bjreview.com.cn/world/txt/2013-08/26/content_563009.htm) (accessed 11/01/2017, 2017).

<sup>41</sup> Bangning Zhou, "Explaining China's Intervention in the Korean War in 1950," *Interstate Journal of International Affairs* 2014/2015, no. 1 (2015, 2015), 1-2, <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1069/explaining-chinas-intervention-in-the-korean-war-in-1950> (accessed 2017).



the war as a means of subduing the masses under the subterfuge of an existential threat posed by the imperialists of the United States. China has taken an interest in Korean affairs for several centuries; the Korean War, the Cold War, and communism amplified their interest.

Three key items appear to be decreasing the PRC's desire to stabilize a failing DPRK as an element of national interest. First, the PRC opened itself to the outside world in the 1970s, most notably with President Nixon's visit. This openness placed the PRC into the system of nations with connections to global trade, banking, and the UN. Second, the Sino Soviet Split and Khrushchev's criticism of Joseph Stalin pushed the PRC in a different direction than the USSR.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the failure and collapse of the USSR encouraged the PRC to adapt to a refined model of communism vastly different than the USSR and DPRK.

The DPRK is an authoritarian one family regime, the PRC is a one-party state transitioning to "socialism with Chinese characteristics."<sup>43</sup> This Chinese desire to move beyond basic communism to a better form of governance, which includes some forms of private enterprise, presents an environment where the PRC and DPRK are showing signs of differences which may result in tension. The Korean Peninsula is not part of what the PRC considers its issues related to sovereignty and territory. Therefore, it appears the Korean Peninsula remaining communist is a matter of honor and fear, not national interests. The honor and fear is tied to the CCP's Korean War narrative, its investment in the Kim Regime, and the fear of a US military presence within a border nation.

A US presence located on the PRC border would cause a great deal of concern for the

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<sup>42</sup> Harold P. Ford, "Calling the Sino-Soviet Split," The Central Intelligence Agency, December 27, 1996, 4, [https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/winter98\\_99/art05.html](https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/winter98_99/art05.html)Ford (accessed 11/01/2017, 2017).

<sup>43</sup> Xi Jinping, "Xi Jinping's Address to the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China," September 09, 2016. [http://cpcchina.chinadaily.com.cn/2010-09/16/content\\_13918113.htm](http://cpcchina.chinadaily.com.cn/2010-09/16/content_13918113.htm) (accessed 11/01/2017).



PRC; therefore, this creates a fault line for all unified Korean Peninsula scenarios. If the Korean Peninsula unifies with a result where U.S. forces are north of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel, the PRC is highly likely to react with force. This is the scenario that unfolded in 1950 during the Korean War. The US is already present in Japan, Guam, and several other Asia Pacific locations. From a PRC viewpoint, an increase in U.S. force posture directly on a PRC border would significantly disrupt the region's balance of power. Keeping a buffer, or a policy of keeping U.S. forces off PRC borders, has played out twice since 1949. Those occasions were the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

It is rational to infer that honor and interest are why the PRC has aided the DPRK since its evolution in conjunction with the USSR. It is also why they serve as the DPRK's sole source of support since the USSR collapsed. The fear of an unfavorable collapse drives the PRC's remaining interests in the DPRK. Additionally, the PRC has long demonstrated a calling to honor their communist neighbor's need for ideological and economic support. A collapse or failure of the DPRK as a nation state would decrement the PRC's standing in the region. This would significantly mar the image of the PRC, their form of communism in the region, and the perception as to whether actions on the ground match their rhetoric.

The PRC is an active leader in Asia Pacific affairs. The PRC is the regional leader on economics, security challenges, transnational projects, and security cooperation. The PRC has traditionally kept out of the affairs of non-border nations. Recently this policy has shown some evolution as the PRC's economic growth is forcing it to develop trade relations beyond the Asia Pacific to provide resources for its manufacturing sectors.

PRC strategy toward sovereignty issues in the past has been to consolidate internal revolutionary gains while waiting for the right opportunity to address external sovereignty issues.



The nation's message that the "Century of Humiliation" at the hands of the west has ended highlights this strategy.<sup>44</sup> The return of Hong Kong by the United Kingdom in 1997 and the return of Macau in 1999 by Portugal resolved two key territorial issues. There remain several others, which include Taiwan, several island chains in the South China Sea, and border disputes with India, Myanmar, and Vietnam.

As the PRC's strength and hegemon status increases in the Asia Pacific it is likely that they may take a more forceful role in resolving these issues. As the PRC's military grows and as transitions occur within the CCP, it may be necessary to act on these claims to quench the thirst of rampant nationalists seeking gains in power under the lens of realism.

Clearly the presence of US forces in the Asia Pacific limits PRC sovereignty claims and attainment of hegemon status. The greatest impediment to that status is U.S. force posture in the Asia Pacific. It isn't just the presence of forces in the region that limits PRC ambitions, it is the treaties and strength of the alliances the US shares with the ROK and Japan. PRC actions to limit U.S. force posture in the region, especially within the ROK and Japan, would indicate this is a major concern as their policy and strategy emerges due their rapid rise in power status.

Another form of recent emergence in PRC strategy is a fallout between the CCP and the Kim Regime. Recently the PRC has voted to enforce UN resolutions that sanction the DPRK. Historically the PRC and USSR served as agents who limited any type of UN resolutions punishing the DPRK. The key exception was the Korean War. That vote occurred at a time when the USSR was abstaining from the UN and the PRC had not yet received recognition as China's

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<sup>44</sup> Allison A. Kaufman. Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *The "Century of Humiliation" and China's National Narratives*, Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission Hearing on "China's Narratives Regarding National Security Policy" sess., 2011, 3, <https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/3.10.11Kaufman.pdf> (accessed 10/30/2017).



lawful government. This shift represents a fault line in PRC and DPRK relations. It may also symbolize that the PRC is fearful of the DPRK crossing the nuclear threshold and is willing to make concessions regarding the DPRK.

The PRC has a great deal to lose with a nuclear-armed DPRK. An explosion at any of the DPRK's nuclear sites could produce fallout that would drift into the PRC. This could create a refugee and identity crisis for the CCP, which has traditionally supported the DPRK. It is likely that the PRC sees a transition in their DPRK strategy as a means to limit U.S. force posture in the region. This is especially important to consider when realizing this shift is occurring at a period where the PRC is considering how to handle its newfound position of strength in the region. This may lead to adaption in their strategy with the DPRK, Taiwan, and the South China Sea. This change in course should sound alarm bells in the US that the PRC is adapting their strategy based on some type of analysis that demonstrated an opportunity to gain a greater share of power in the region.

The Philippines filed a complaint with the Law of the Sea Arbitration Panel at The Hague Tribunal against the PRC in 2013, based on disputed maritime claims related to uninhabited islands in the South China Sea.<sup>45</sup> In July of 2016, The Hague Panel ruled that the PRC's militarization of reefs in the South China Sea was unfounded and that their vast maritime claims were unlawful. To the amazement of many, the US has not emphasized The Hague Arbitral's ruling and it has not seized the opportunity it presented to create an enduring framework for sovereignty claims and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea. This has all occurred at a time where the PRC is executing a form of "legal warfare" where it signs agreements with

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<sup>45</sup> Luan Graham, "**The Hague Tribunal's South China Sea Ruling: Empty Provocation or Slow-Burning Influence?**" Council on Foreign Relations, August 18, 2016. [https://www.cfr.org/councilofcouncils/global\\_memos/p38227](https://www.cfr.org/councilofcouncils/global_memos/p38227) (accessed 12/01/2017, 2017).



nations who have claims in the region only to later renege on those agreements. The PRC is clearly violating those agreements as it militarizes the islands with air and naval power. This is an emerging form of political warfare executed masterfully by the PRC.

Below is a summary of the PRC's national interests, policies, and strategy:

	National Interests	Key Policies	Strategy
<b>PRC</b>	Maintain CCP rule, sovereignty claims, prosperity, social stability	One Country Two Systems (HK & Macau, One China (Taiwan)	Unrestricted political warfare, One Belt One Road Initiative, engage region, slowly resolve sovereignty issues thru coercion or refusal to accept international agreements, build conventional and asymmetric capabilities

Using the Ways of Seeing model, below is a modeled summary of the PRC's worldview:

How the PRC Sees Self	How PRC Sees US	How PRC Sees ROK	How PRC sees DPRK
Obligation to sustain CCP	World power	Rising power	Different form of communism
Sovereignty issues always considered	Hegemon competitor	Great trading partner	Incapable of sustaining self
Taiwan is major concern	Destabilizes region	Can aid in solving DPRK crisis,	Provides opportunity to destabilize US
Humiliated by West, their time/century	Greatest trade partner – also greatest threat to PRC	Better partner than DPRK, but US is a problem	Provides opportunity for Russia to limit PRC
Hegemon in region, continues to grow in power	Cannot match conventional power globally, opportunity exists regionally	Engage and balance relationship	Flawed system, a former client, but not Chinese
Transitioning to socialism, rate of change in environment requires socialism with communist tendencies	Unlimited source of intelligence (universities, military industrial complex, conventional capabilities)	Opportunity to weaken US position in region starts with ROK basing	Nuclear status is harmful to PRC and region, fallout blows into PRC
			Constant source of border issues & international embarrassment as CCP grows globally



## Chapter 4. DPRK National Interests, Policy, and Strategy

The DPRK is a closed society that seldom publishes formal national interests. A great source for determining their national interests is their constitution which was written in 1972, its 1992 update, and Kim Jong-un's Byungjin Policy of simultaneous economic and nuclear growth. The original and the updated DRPK constitutions clearly indicate reunification and the completion of socialist revolution by the Korean Workers Party (KWP) as critical interests. Based on those documents and inferences from observed behavior, below are the DPRK's national interests:<sup>46</sup>

- Survival of the Regime
- Maintain the KWP and completion of the socialist revolution
- Reunification of the Korean Peninsula
- Obtain a self-sufficient economy
- Simultaneous development of its economy and nuclear programs (Byungjin Policy)

These interests are relatively straightforward; two are similar to the ROK's national interests. However, one must understand that the DPRK and ROK's internal views of reunification are far different. The DPRK desires this under the auspices of the Kim Regime. The ROK views successful reunification as one that yields democracy and universal rights for all Koreans.

DPRK policy towards reunification started in earnest before launching the Korean War. After the war their policy had three objectives. First, the DPRK armed and organized the entire

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<sup>46</sup> Homer T. Hodge, "DPRK Briefing Book: North Korea's Military Strategy," *Parameters* Spring 2003 (2003), 75-76, <https://nautilus.org/publications/books/dprkbb/military/dprk-briefing-book-north-koreas-military-strategy/> (accessed 10/29/2017).



nation for protracted war.<sup>47</sup> Second, was the execution of small scale attacks near the Demilitarized Zone against ROK and US forces.<sup>48</sup> Third, was the infiltration of the ROK by the DPRK's special purpose forces.<sup>49</sup>

Intense poverty and famine in the 1990s hampered the DPRK's ability to develop plans, often seen as cycles of provocation, which operationalized their policy goals. Their emergent strategy since the 1990s is to flirt with the first threshold of avoiding large scale war with a superior conventional force. The DPRK views the US as that type of threat. The DPRK uses the threat of crossing that threshold and creating subsequent devastation for all parties involved to achieve real power gains in the form of external aid from nations wanting to avoid war. They have accelerated that effort due to a new form of desperation, caused by the changes in the geostrategic and geopolitical environments covered earlier, by seeking nuclear weapons and flirting with the nuclear warfare threshold.

The DPRK's strategy has shifted greatly over the past sixty-five years. Many assess that the DPRK was the stronger of the two Koreas until the early 1970s.<sup>50</sup> This is an unexplored phenomenon with several occurrences, it happens when a homogenous nation splits into two states where one accepts central planning via communism and the other accepts capitalism. The central planning associated with communism provides a closed system that provides an initial means of stability. This occurs because this type of closed system insulates the nation's markets and industries from the stress of adaptation immediately after intense social upheaval. However,

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 75-76.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 75-76.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 75-76.

<sup>50</sup> North and South Korea: Separate Paths of Economic Development, "The Central Intelligence Agency," The Central Intelligence Agency, 3-8, January 11, 2011. <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T00875R001700030082-7.pdf> (accessed 11/01/2017, 2017).



this is akin to solving a complex problem with a linear solution, since the insular nature of such systems fail to achieve or see the gains the rest of the open and developing world experiences as systems evolve and improve.

When trying to redevelop after the horrors and devastation of large scale conventional war, a closed system often yields the greatest initial results. However, these results are short-lived. This was the window of opportunity that the DPRK was experiencing after the Korean War and well into the 1970s. The DPRK's conventional power and economic advantage has since changed strategy due to famine, extreme poverty, and the costs associated with maintaining a regime led by one family, which has experienced two transfers of power.

The insular nature of the Kim Regime and the DPRK results in a strategy that expends tremendous resources focused on security. The burden of requiring an immense internal security apparatus combined with a large conventional force to defend its sovereignty has continually bankrupted the DPRK. Most nations can only afford to do one or the other. Stabilizing this type of existence requires tremendous ideological unity and resourcing.

The regime was closer to economic stability when it was receiving both USSR and PRC aid. In the 1990s two critical global phenomena worked to decrement the DPRK's solvency. They were the shift to a multipolar world order and the PRC's exponential growth as it refined its economic system to compete within the globalized world. Both were key factors in ending the significant aid requirements that kept the regime afloat as a client state of the USSR and PRC. The result was a strategy with increasingly risky provocations aimed at achieving attention and international aid.

Dictatorship driven regimes create a form of dysfunction where the state cannot achieve



self-sufficiency ideologically or economically without significant external support. The existential threat provided by the U.S. presence in the ROK and Japan serves as the energy source to fuel the DPRK's cognitive ideology. This existential threat is a critical element of DPRK strategy, which convinces the populace that their oppression and harsh quality of life is part of the burden required to deter external aggressors. The DPRK must maintain a narrative that the ROK and US are enemies of the state. This narrative provides the stability required for the Kim Regime to remain in power despite being unable to provide basic resources and quality of life standards to the populace. These two factors sustain the DPRK's ideology that it is under constant threat from external agents, which enables its internal and security apparatuses.

The previous chapter discussed how the DPRK is evolving its strategy by developing nuclear weapons. The regime clearly believes that attaining such weapons will yield a form of stability based on the deterrence of mutually assured destruction. The DPRK appears on path to achieve nuclear status in the near future. It is unknown how close they are in their effort to develop miniaturized nuclear warheads capable of being mounted on missiles.<sup>51</sup> Today the DPRK is feverishly working to extend the range of their rockets and missiles so they can range targets throughout the Asia Pacific Region and potentially the continental US. Their test of a Hwasong-15 missile in November of 2017 proved for the first time that the DPRK can strike the US mainland.<sup>52</sup>

As the US focused on its wars in the Middle East, the DPRK made the successful

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<sup>51</sup> Anna Fifield, Ellen Nakashima and Joby Warrick, "**North Korea Now Making Missile-Ready Nuclear Weapons, U.S. Analysts Say**," *The Washington Post*, sec. National Security, 08/08/2017, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/north-korea-now-making-missile-ready-nuclear-weapons-us-analysts-say/2017/08/08/e14b882a-7b6b-11e7-9d08-b79f191668ed\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.a25b8896af7c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/north-korea-now-making-missile-ready-nuclear-weapons-us-analysts-say/2017/08/08/e14b882a-7b6b-11e7-9d08-b79f191668ed_story.html?utm_term=.a25b8896af7c) (accessed 12/01/2017).

<sup>52</sup> Ryan Browne and others, "**New Missile Test shows North Korea Capable of Hitting all of US Mainland**," CNN, November 30, 2017. <http://www.cnn.com/2017/11/28/politics/north-korea-missile-launch/index.html> (accessed 01/06/2018, 2017).



transition from the threshold of conventional threat to the nuclear threshold. Amazingly, the DPRK achieved this transition in a peaceful manner. Unlike Iran they made it despite sanctions and developed a nuclear program which now significantly effects the ROK, Japan, the PRC, and US.

More alarming is the fact that any short range nuclear attack by the DPRK can target US citizens. Over 230,000 U.S. citizens live in the ROK; the majority reside in the capital of Seoul which is just thirty-five miles south of the DMZ.<sup>53</sup> The argument that the DPRK is not yet a nuclear threat is a losing debate, with minimal effort the DPRK can now target U.S. troops and citizens with nuclear materials that do not have to be delivered via rockets or missiles. The DPRK's emergent strategy to maintain nuclear power status is forcing Japan, the PRC, the ROK, and the US to reassess their policies and strategies.

The DPRK has clearly created an environment where the US, PRC, ROK, and Japan are forced to manage their nuclear power status. The option to prevent their nuclear program has failed, although opportunities may exist in the future to negotiate its dismantling. The DPRK has demonstrated the ability to exercise a nuclear attack, yet they have not launched their capabilities at the US, ROK, or Japan. This strengthens the argument that the DPRK desire's to achieve nuclear power status is aimed at experiencing the deterrence provided by the stability-instability paradox. Furthermore, this scenario simultaneously preserves the power status of the Kim Regime, which serves as a win-win for the DPRK.

The DPRK's economy, military, and populace have clearly suffered from stagnant

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<sup>53</sup> Thomas Hunt, "US Preparing to 'EVACUATE 230,000 Americans from South Korea,'" Sunday Express, April 24, 2017. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/795572/Kim-Jong-un-North-Korea-Donald-Trump-US-South-Korea-army-evacuation-Courageous-Channel> (accessed 12/01/2017, 2017).



growth over the past twenty-five years. The DPRK suffered a tremendous famine in the 1990s and may have never fully recovered from its effects.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, the DPRK has one of the most closed and isolated governments on the planet; this status has earned it the moniker of “The Hermit Kingdom.”

Below is a summary of the DPRK’s national interests, policies, and strategy:

	National Interests	Key Policies	Strategy
<b>DPRK</b>	Survival of Kim Regime, maintain KWP, reunification, self-sufficiency	Closed society, KIZ cooperative, family reunions	Continue to probe ROK and US, engage in small scale attacks to press action/attention, achieve nuclear weapons to ensure regime’s long-term survival and deterrence capacity, seek non-aggression/peace treaty

Using the Ways of Seeing model, below is a modeled summary of the DPRK’s worldview:

How the DPRK Sees Self	How DPRK Sees US	How DPRK Sees ROK	How DPRK Sees PRC
The purest race	Imperialist	Rising power	Great rising power
Kim Regime is the great savior from imperialists	Violator of DPRK rights during Korean War	Source of embarrassment – their system has outpaced ours	Fellow communist but digressing from DPRK
Want status quo, no war, but require outside aid	Greatest threat to regime	Potential for aid but requires constant prodding	Obligated to support DPRK
Nuclear weapons provides Kim Regime long-term stability	Waiting for right opportunity to dismantle KWP and Kim Regime	2 <sup>nd</sup> greatest threat to stability	Great rising power; opening of PRC to outside world a threat
Prefer and entitled to Hermit status	Willing to avoid absolute war if price is high	A means of weakening US power in region	Threatened by nuclear status
A transition to cross-border hostilities eventually ends the regime (lose-lose scenario)	Must pit US barbarian against ROK barbarians...	Dedicated to reunification...but on their terms	

<sup>54</sup> Jordan Weissman, "How Kim Jong Il Starved North Korea," *The Atlantic* (12/20/2011, 2011), <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2011/12/how-kim-jong-il-starved-north-korea/250244/> (accessed 12/01/2017).



## **Part III. The Problem Frame**

### **Chapter 1. Design Outputs - A Summary of the Environmental and Problem Frames**

The previous chapter defined an Environmental Frame, based on recent changes to the geostrategic and geopolitical environment. Below is summation in a narrative format:

The emergence of the geostrategic environment includes three distinct thresholds of conflict (nuclear, conventional, and asymmetric) that evolved simultaneously with the decline in the power of the nation state and the subsequent rise in power of international organizations and institutions. The geopolitical environment has adapted from a bipolar world order to one that is now multipolar. This propelled the emergence of unrestricted state led political warfare and the rise of intrastate conflict, by unrecognized nations of people who seek representation by the state or political independence.

The Problem Frame discussed in this chapter outlays the national interests, policies, and strategies of the two major powers in the Asia Pacific (US and PRC), the four key players in the continuing crisis on the Korean Peninsula, and the proverbial “fork in the road” that each nation faces at the tactical level, while considering geostrategic and geopolitical considerations (intended and unintended consequences).

The tables developed in the previous chapter summarized the national interests, policies, and strategies of the US, ROK, PRC, and DPRK. Below is a consolidated summary:



	<b>National Interests</b>	<b>Key Policies</b>	<b>Strategy</b>
<b>US</b>	Security, prosperity, universal rights, world order	Contain communism, defend ROK, defend Taiwan, Pacific pivot	Engage region, forward presence (basing), Joint exercises with ROK, Japan, and key regional nations
<b>ROK</b>	Security and prosperity, promotion of democracy, world peace, reunification	Sunshine policy, KIZ cooperative, US basing and collective defense	Maintain status quo with DPRK, build large modernized military, heightened security posture, large investments in manufacturing, infrastructure, and transportation
<b>PRC</b>	Maintain CCP, sovereignty claims, prosperity, social stability	One Country Two Systems (HK & Macau, One China (Taiwan))	Unrestricted political warfare, One Belt One Road Initiative, engage region, slowly resolve sovereignty issues thru coercion or refusal to accept international agreements, build conventional and asymmetric capabilities
<b>DPRK</b>	Survival of Kim Regime, maintain KWP, reunification, self-sufficiency	Closed society, KIZ cooperative, family reunions	Continue to probe ROK and US, engage in small scale attacks to press action/attention, achieve nuclear weapons to ensure regime's long-term survival and deterrence capacity, seek non-aggression/peace treaty



## Chapter 2. Ways of Seeing the Problem Summary

The chapters on the US, ROK, PRC, and DPRK, developed a Ways of Seeing the Problem model. Below is a consolidated summary of those charts;

How the US Sees Self	How US Sees PRC	How US Sees DPRK	How the ROK Sees Self	How the ROK Sees PRC	How the ROK Sees DPRK	How the PRC Sees Self	How the PRC Sees US	How the PRC Sees ROK	How the PRC Sees DPRK	How the DPRK Sees Self	How the DPRK Sees US	How the DPRK Sees ROK	How the DPRK Sees PRC
Lone superpower	Rising power	Backwards, Hostile	World Superpower	Rising power	Oppressive regime	Obligation to sustain CCP	World power	Rising power	Different form of communism,	The purest race	Imperialist	Rising power	Great rising power
Special partner	Special partner – usually have aligned interests	Special partner – usually have aligned interests	Leader of free world	Potential to be largest trading partner	Same ethnicity; different system of governance	Sovereignty issues always considered	Hegemon competitor	Great trading partner	Incapable of sustaining self	Kim Regime is the great savior from imperialists	Violator of DPRK rights during Korean War	Source of embarrassment – their system has outpaced ours	Fellow communist but digressing from DPRK
Advocate for human rights	Competitor	Oppressive	Miracle on the Han party enabled by US assistance	Potential to be greatest trading partner	Same ethnicity; different system of governance	Sovereignty issues always considered	Hegemon competitor	Great trading partner	Incapable of sustaining self	Kim Regime is the great savior from imperialists	Violator of DPRK rights during Korean War	Source of embarrassment – their system has outpaced ours	Fellow communist but digressing from DPRK
Regional hegemon – earned via WWII & Korean War	Oppressive on human rights and free speech	Last frontier of communism	Their time – their century	Partner in security – Significant US bases in ROK deter DPRK	Fellow Koreans are victims of Kim Regime	Taiwan is a major concern	Destabilizes region	Can aid in solving DPRK crisis,	Provides opportunity to destabilize US	Want status quo, no war, but require outside aid	Greatest threat to regime	Potential for aid but requires constant prodding	Obligated to support DPRK
ROK & Miracle on the Han are evidence of success (US way of life)	Incredible trade partner; (Armistice); need show strength when attacked by DPRK	Thorn in side (honor)	Technically at war with DPRK (Armistice); need show strength when attacked by DPRK	US a source of tension in PRC relations	A threat to stability (fear & interests)	Humiliated by West, their time/century	Greatest trade partner – also greatest threat to PRC	Better partner than DPRK, but US is a problem	Provides opportunity for Russia to limit PRC	Nuclear weapons provides Kim Regime long-term stability	Waiting for right opportunity to dismantle KWP and Kim Regime	2 <sup>nd</sup> greatest threat to stability	Great rising power; opening of PRC to outside world a threat
Must influence world order	Long-term partner despite post WWII hiccups	A threat to stability (fear & interests); increasingly dangerous	Happy with status quo regarding DPRK	Suspicious of US – Japan relationship	Has to be dealt with eventually, no one has the political or economic capital to fix the issue	Hegemon in region, continues to grow in power	Cannot match conventional power globally, opportunity exists regionally	Engage and balance relationship	Flawed system, a former client, but not Chinese	Prefer and entitled to Hermit status	Willing to avoid absolute war if price is high	A means of weakening US power in region	Threatened by nuclear status
Pivoting towards Asia Pacific	Seeking hegemon status; threat to financial system (World Bank, IMF)	Must be dealt with eventually, even if regime collapses	Economic powerhouse; Asia's rising star	Suspicious of US starting war with DPRK	Time is distancing cultural & familial ties – generosity achieves limited effects	Transitioning to socialism, rate of change in environment requires socialism with communist tendencies	Unlimited source of intelligence (universities, military industrial complex, conventional capabilities)	Opportunity to weaken US position in region starts with ROK basing	Nuclear status is harmful to PRC and region, fallout blows into PRC (lose-lose scenario)	A transition to cross-border hostilities eventually ends the regime (lose-lose scenario)	Must pit US barbarian against ROK barbarians...	Dedicated to reunification ..but on their terms	
	The enduring source of the DPRK challenge	Possession of nuclear weapons crosses a significant threshold	Shamed by Japanese occupation; drives animosity and distrust of Japan	Part of solution of DPRK problem inextricably linked	Possession of nuclear weapons crosses a significant threshold				Constant source of border issues & international embarrassment as CCP grows globally		Must pit US barbarian against ROK barbarians...		



The Ways of Seeing summary displays a key learning point for the application of Design Theory. Three key factors allow greater understanding of the problem. They are understanding likeness, difference, and the identification of adaptation. Complex systems are always moving and morphing due to their multivariate nature. Relationships are typically the hardest part of a system to measure and assess.

The Ways of Seeing summary enables the understanding of potential and propensity within a system. Major differences in ways of seeing indicate the potential to cross a threshold. After assessing likenesses and differences one can achieve an understanding of tendencies amongst the four assessed nations. A key output of the analysis is that it identifies areas where the application of resources can achieve a desired potential. The differences highlight tensions where national leaders are likely to remain unwavering without significant concessions by other parties. To push a national leader off those anchor points would require some form of gain in power by the conceding nation, which is likely to expend significant resources or the potential crossing of the nuclear or conventional threshold described earlier. A propensity or tendency to cross thresholds is important to annotate. Failure to do so can result in invalidated assumptions with significant long-term costs.

For a strategist and designer, the Ways of Seeing model attempts to answer Sun Tzu's timeless maxim on strategic thought. It states that, "one who knows the enemy and not himself will not be victorious in a hundred battles. One who does not know the enemy but knows himself will sometimes be victorious, sometimes met with defeat. One who knows neither the enemy nor himself will invariably be defeated in every engagement."<sup>55</sup> In today's lexicon this is termed

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<sup>55</sup> Sunzi, Ralph D. Sawyer and Mei-chün Sawyer, *The Art of War*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994, 179, <https://nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://site.ebrary.com/lib/nationaldefense/Doc?id=10426177>.



metacognition. Sun Tzu's maxim of knowing self and the other is where metacognition is so important in a complex world. The ability to envision a series of actions, reactions, and counteractions by friend and foe is the difference between average senior leaders and those who possess genius. This was what Clausewitz's termed "*coup d'oeil*," and described as the gifts of superior intuition and determination which leads to the type of genius few possess.<sup>56</sup> When dealing with complexity, individuals and groups must understand how they think in lieu of taking comfort with someone telling them what to think. They must understand how their brain handles bias and aversions; especially as it makes hidden shortcuts towards potential solutions, based on learned patterns of thought.

The ability to exercise metacognitive thought allows strategists and designers the ability to assess complex systems. Complex systems generate problems that are unsolvable. There is no "silver bullet" or magical piece of the puzzle that solve the problems generated by complex adaptive systems. The unpredictability of human behavior combined with the unknown nature of social relationships and chance create a multitude of complex layers to problems. This is akin to only seeing the tip of an iceberg and seldom realizing the bulk of the iceberg lies beneath the surface of the sea.

This makes problems such as the DPRK's nuclear ambitions, PRC sovereignty, PRC border stability, and freedom of navigation thru the South China Sea challenging to understand and solve. One must first make the connections, then see the interdependent parts, and only then can one find ways to influence the system in a desired manner. Several hallmarks of complex

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<sup>56</sup> Carl Von Clausewitz, Peter Paret and Michael Eliot Howard, *On War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 101, <https://nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=390520&site=eds-live&scope=site>



systems aid in generating solutions. They are the presence of adaption, emergence, entropy, and the notion that the system is only as strong as its weakest link.<sup>57</sup> The ability to exercise metacognitive thought enables the potential for unfiltered logic. This enables the ability to envision what types of adaptation positively influence a complex system, despite the uncertainty and inability to completely influence future outcomes.

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<sup>57</sup> Fabio Boschetti, Mikhail Prokopenko and Alex J. Ryan, "An Information-Theoretic Primer on Complexity, Self-Organization, and Emergence," *Wiley Periodicals, Inc* 15, no. 1 (October 29, 2008, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/cplx.20249/epdf> (accessed 12/01/2017).



### **Chapter 3. SWOT Analysis**

The chart below depicts strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of each analyzed nation. The strength of this framework is that it captures the national interests, policies, and strategies of each nation, as depicted in previous chapters, while providing a glimpse of potential future outcomes. Executing a SWOT analysis informed by a Ways of Seeing Analysis enables the prediction future outcomes grounded in facts (national interests), actions (policy and strategy), and the depiction of positive and negative outcomes (threats and opportunities).



<b>SWOT Analysis</b>	<b>US</b>	<b>ROK</b>	<b>PRC</b>	<b>DPRK</b>
Strengths	Lone superpower in a multipolar world order, significant positive influence with ROK, Japan, and Asia Pacific region	Meteoric rise in economy and military might over past 25 years, gaining while DPRK losing steam	Meteoric rise in power over past 25 years, their continued rise is inevitable	Has nuclear capability, has aura of an unpredictable and reckless nature, reckless abandon for own population leads liberalist nations wanting to intervene/prone to providing assistance
Weaknesses	Losing position to PRC - is inevitable, has not decided where and how to compete no grand strategy, Taiwan is a weakening position with limited positive outcomes	Has DPRK as a neighbor, imbalances in economy and power has residual or liberalist costs (cannot live with being so much better off than own people in DPRK), nuclear DPRK can end all life on Korean Peninsula within hours	Nowhere near or capable of energy independence - only getting more challenging, nearly all energy flows thru Strait of Malacca, majority of population still insulated from outside world (censorship), huge burden spent on internal security mechanism, DPRK is a burden that is no longer worth the benefit it once provided as a buffer	Loss of PRC backing/aid, loss of USSR client status/aid, minimal economic power, loss of conventional parity with ROK, has no friends in region, increasing sanctions weaken economic recovery/growth
Opportunities	Both US and PRC want DPRK denuclearized; Japan willing to rearm due to DPRK and rising China, Hague Court Ruling	US, PRC and ROK all want denuclearization, tremendous trade market in China, do not want to be left out of one belt one road, has an opportunity to work with PRC...rail route already built on ROK side in effort to join One Belt One Road	Agrees with US and ROK on denuclearizing region, huge opportunity with newfound wealth to bypass IMF & World bank as a hegemon, can stake favorable investments in region by smaller ASEAN members (financial control, One Belt One Road), One Belt One Road can shift energy dependence risks and reliance on Strait of Malacca, Island expansion can lead to more influence/potential control of South China Sea, US withdrawal from TPP	Can join nuclear club, can threaten to join club to gain more support, former supporters (Russian and PRC) are rising in power, they all have a common interest in countering US hegemony
Threats	Rising PRC, DRPK nuclear ambitions and risk of collapse/use, failure to act on Hague ruling, withdrawal from TPP	Nuclear DPRK can end all life on Korean Peninsula within hours, still leery of Japan, any agreement with Japan has political costs due to occupation, instability between PRC and US has unintended consequences on ROK – does a time arise when should edge to PRC?	Taiwan remains a threat to regime, but is lessening over time, border dispute, foreign influence is novel, One Belt One Road may create more problems than gains (cultural autism), anyone other than them controlling strait of Malacca a risk to energy dependence, Japan reinvigorating their external defense capability a tremendous threat and potential imbalance of regional power, Hague Court Ruling	ROK is outpacing DRPK economically and militarily, Kim Regime may not be able to endure much longer domestically with status quo, cost of maintaining regime hampering ability to feed and arm nation, current actions may cross threshold #1 (nuclear) or #2 (conventional) with US, ROK, PRC and potentially Japan, encouraging Japan to reinvigorate external defense capability



Other models and frameworks offer similar predictive capabilities. The most popular are Game Theory, the Prisoner's Dilemma, and BATNA (best alternative to a negotiated agreement). All three have one thing in common, no party ever receives their number one or preferred outcome.<sup>58</sup> This highlights the world's tendency towards violence to achieve unilateral goals. This demonstrates the very nature of war, which Carl von Clausewitz defined as primordial violence aimed at a political objective.<sup>59</sup> Whether by war or peace, the analysis demonstrates that no nation can achieve all their goals on the Korean Peninsula and the Asia Pacific Region.

The fork in the road mentioned earlier highlighted three paths with several potential outcomes. First was the status quo, where the US and ROK continued to not intervene while the DPRK remains on path to achieve a status where they can deliver nuclear weapons. In this scenario, the PRC could intervene to halt nuclear weapon production through a variety of methods. The second path involves reunification of the Korean Peninsula through two potential scenarios. In the first scenario, the US and ROK could intervene, either by force or by support of an internal ouster of the Kim Regime. In the second scenario, the US, ROK, and PRC could work together to remove the Kim Regime and denuclearize the DPRK. A potential third fork in the road is one where the DPRK introduces reforms and decides to abandon its nuclear weapons program.

The third fork is highly unlikely; especially after the DPRK and PRC witnessed firsthand how quickly perestroika and glasnost accelerated the dismantling of the USSR. Libya's expulsion of its former leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 further cements the reluctance of

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<sup>58</sup> Johannes Theiss, "NATO: The Process of Negotiating Military Intervention in Libya" *Arab Spring*, ed. I. William Zartman (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 357-359 (accessed 12/01/2017).

<sup>59</sup> Von Clausewitz, Paret and Howard, *On War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 89, <https://nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=390520&site=eds-live&scope=site>.



dictators to yield their position of power. Shortly after escaping Tripoli Gaddafi was killed and mutilated by his own citizens.

**Ceasing Movement - The Status Quo.** The status quo scenario where all parties leave the DPRK on track to miniaturize its nuclear capability into warheads with global reach is a frightening scenario for the US, ROK, PRC, and Japan. This path is one where all parties, minus the DPRK, stop movement and decide not to head down any of the forks in the road. Rhetoric from consecutive US Presidents has stated that a nuclear-armed DPRK is unacceptable. The challenge is that the DPRK is already successfully testing nuclear weapons and long range missiles.

This scenario emerges in several manners. First, it strengthens the US and ROK alliance. Second, it has the potential to bring traditional enemies, the ROK and Japan, to a beneficial partnership. Lastly, it ceases Japanese aversions from developing a large military. This scenario provides limited benefits for the PRC.

The PRC is averse to Japan expanding its military; additionally, it loathes the US and ROK alliance. The PRC's Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, recently stated that a transition to hostilities on the Korean Peninsula presents a scenario where, "once a war really happens, the result will be nothing but multiple loss. No one can become a winner."<sup>60</sup> The DPRK's nuclear capability provides a huge risk to the PRC. During warmer climate months the predominant trade winds would blow nuclear fallout from failed or destroyed reactors, or any nuclear weapons effects into the PRC. The worsening economic and humanitarian crisis in the DPRK creates a migration challenge where people escaping oppression would cross into the PRC seeking asylum

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<sup>60</sup> Eleanor Albert, "The China–North Korea Relationship," *The Council on Foreign Relations* (2017), <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-north-korea-relationship> (accessed 12/01/2017).



and eventual passage into the ROK. Additionally, the DPRK, a former client state, would then serve as a source of embarrassment for the PRC.

The pros for the PRC are keeping the US away from its borders and using the DPRK as a source that exhausts resources and political capital for the US. There is a lack of examination among western academics on whether the PRC experiences more negative effects than the US with a malign DPRK. This is a critical aim of this analysis. If the scenario crossed the first threshold of nuclear war, the DPRK, PRC, ROK, and US all lose tremendously. However, in all other branches this path transits, it appears the PRC experiences an equal amount or more cons than the US. This indicates that keeping the US off its borders is a hidden burden the PRC is willing to experience. This also reinforces several of the opportunities listed in the SWOT analysis.

A key outcome of the status quo is that U.S. security posture in the region and the Korean Peninsula remains unchanged. U.S. basing in the ROK and Japan endures, causing the PRC continued angst and the inability to pressure Taiwan beyond the current stalemate. Additionally, the US maintains basing for air, ground, and naval forces, which maintains freedom of navigation in the Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea. North Korea's malign actions positively influence relations, to include continued access to basing, between the US and its two key allies, the ROK and Japan. Again, from this analysis, barring a nuclear attack, the status quo greatly favors the U.S. position.

The great winner in the status quo is the DPRK's Kim regime. It can garner concessions from the US, PRC, and the ROK as its nuclear capability expands. Once completely nuclear



capable, the regime gains a security blanket that allows a Kim led DPRK to endure well into the future.<sup>61</sup> This is a lose-lose for all parties except the DPRK's Kim Regime.

**Path #1 – Reunification.** This is the first path beyond the fork in the road to explore. This scenario can occur through peace or armed conflict. A peaceful reunification initiated by the DPRK is not a realistic possibility based on disparity in political goals and the elements of national power between the two nations. A collapse of the Kim Regime and the application of the elements of national power under the three thresholds could yield to reunification. In this scenario the ROK and potentially the PRC, would experience a tremendous burden. The economics of reunification could aid the Korean Peninsula in the long-term. However, the initial cost would certainly alter the quality of life which ROK citizens currently experience since conservative estimates assess reunification costing well over \$1 Trillion USD.<sup>62</sup>

The humanitarian crisis, lack of infrastructure, and lack of governance in the DPRK would require an overwhelming amount of international and regional support. The ROK would experience an overnight humanitarian crisis.<sup>63</sup> A key concern to consider via an ROK initiated peaceful reunification is the security posture of the US. The ROK has made it clear they want to lead the effort on humanitarian aid. It is safe to assume the PRC is clearly against the US providing direct humanitarian aid to the citizens of the DPRK after a regime collapse. This would lessen the position of the PRC. The PRC made it clear in 1950 that any U.S. movement north of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel triggers the crossing of the conventional response threshold. The PRC

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<sup>61</sup> Vickiie Oliphant, "'USA Will Not Win' North Korea Vows to Never Stop Building Nukes as WW3 Fears Rise," *Sunday Express*, September 13, 2017, 2017, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/853879/North-Korea-news-latest-world-war-3-kim-jong-un-never-stop-nuclear-weapons-program> (accessed 12/01/2017).

<sup>62</sup> The Data Team, "What North and South Korea would Gain if they were Reunified," *The Economist* (2016), <https://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2016/05/korea-opportunities> (accessed 12/01/2017).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.



continues to hold a treaty with the DPRK that it will aid in its defense if attacked. Based on the interests of the ROK and DPRK, in most scenarios it is likely that U.S. forces would remain south of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel if the DPRK collapsed to assuage the interests of the PRC and ROK.

A key concern in peaceful reunification is the DPRK's denuclearization. The US and the international community possesses most of the technical expertise on how to safely dismantle the DPRK's nuclear apparatus. The unknown is how would the PRC react to any scenario where the US would cross the 38th Parallel; even if that effort is cleaning up nuclear effects that benefit the PRC. It is safe to assume the PRC would act against a permanent U.S. presence in what is currently the DPRK. The lingering question is how would the PRC act if the US was involved in the temporary dismantling of the DPRK's nuclear capabilities. The outcomes of the models indicate this is an area of likeness, with mutual benefits, and opportunity where the PRC, ROK, and US could achieve consensus.

PRC led reunification would likely occur through a phased approach. The first step would be removal of the Kim Regime, followed by denuclearization of the DPRK. The US is likely to welcome such an approach. The ROK is likely to have concerns with this approach; but would certainly welcome denuclearization. The PRC would initially find its position strengthened. It would no longer have to deal with a malign actor such as Kim Jong-un. However, the PRC would still have to deal with a US presence south of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. Removing the Kim Regime would alleviate stress in Japan, potentially to a point where the PRC could negotiate limiting



their proposed constitutional changes, which currently aim to allow a military build-up that includes the development of offensive capabilities.<sup>64</sup>

The removal of Kim Regime would allow the PRC to denuclearize the DPRK by its own means or through international assistance. This is the key variable to the equation, if reunification were PRC led, it could then control the level of U.S. influence above the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. The PRC would have to find the right agents in the DPRK who they could trust with their support. The key outcome would be an alignment of PRC resources and DPRK governance. The resulting humanitarian crisis would certainly affect the PRC and the ROK. The PRC would have to find a scenario where they would welcome ROK assistance, sans U.S. presence and meddling in what is currently DPRK territory. Anything other than a police-state is likely to trigger a massive migration of refugees throughout the DPRK. A police-state effort is not likely from the PRC; the Korean people are not ethnic Chinese, nor is their territory viewed as part of a sovereign China. The PRC and DPRK partnership is traditionally based on communist ideology. However, as noted earlier, Xi Jinping claims to be transitioning a reformed PRC beyond that system, which now creates less alignment between the two states.

An integrated and collaborative approach could occur if the US and ROK invited the PRC to assist under a legal charter. For example, this could occur under a UN mandate that all parties deem both beneficial and amenable. This type of scenario would transform third party intervention into a form of mutually beneficial international cooperation. Additionally, this form of agreement would lessen the risk of a broader conflict.

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<sup>64</sup> Brad Lendon, "**Japanese Leader Sets 2020 Deadline for Changing Pacifist Constitution**," CNN, May 03, 2017. <http://www.cnn.com/2017/05/03/asia/japan-abe-pacifist-constitution/index.html> (accessed December 01, 2017, 2017).



One final consideration is Russia and its border with the DPRK. Russia would likely experience a small migration of people during any form of reunification; however, their influence in the region is currently minimal and the PRC has shown a previous desire to align with the US over Russia since the mid-1970s.<sup>65</sup> The genesis of this change was the Sino-Soviet split, followed by President Nixon's visit to the PRC, and Chairman Deng's visit to Washington, DC, in 1979.<sup>66</sup> Although Russian influence in the region is currently minimal; they have recently made attempts to engage the DPRK and international community regarding the Korean Peninsula.<sup>67</sup> The topic to examine moving forward is whether the PRC has a preference to partner with Russia or the US as the situation continues to evolve. It is clear that the PRC sees the US as its largest threat and most significant competitor in the region. The scenario becomes more entangled when considering the US is the PRC's largest trade partner.

## **Path #2 – Reunification by Way of Armed Conflict**

Reunification by armed conflict is the most dangerous of all the paths in the fork. The level of lethality has increased significantly with the DPRK's nuclear program. There are three scenarios involved with this path. They are 1) conflict initiated by the ROK and US alliance, 2) conflict initiated by the PRC, and 3) conflict initiated by the DPRK.

A conventional conflict initiated by the ROK and US alliance is highly likely to overwhelm the DPRK's ability to defend itself. However, in war there is always the element of chance. One must also consider that the PRC is obligated by treaty to assist the DPRK if it is attacked. Additionally, if another lopsided conflict arose on the Korean Peninsula would Russia

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<sup>65</sup> Xiamong Zhang, *Deng Xiaoping and China's War Decision* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 52, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469621258\\_zhang.8](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469621258_zhang.8) (accessed 11/25/2017).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>67</sup> Jamie Tarabay, "Russia's Power Play in North Korea Aimed at both China and US," CNN, September 09, 2017. <http://www.cnn.com/2017/09/01/asia/russia-north-korea-analysis/index.html> (accessed 12/02/2017, 2017).



intervene or execute malign influence to limit gains by the US. One must also consider that the PRC has recently indicated they are not obligated by treaty to assist the DRPK if the Kim Regime were to initiate an attack on the ROK.<sup>68</sup>

The PRC and Russia have a history of statements indicating they would become involved if the US moved north of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel towards their borders. US gains in power on the peninsula would not enamor either nation while creating an environment where a counteraction to restore the balance of power is likely. Although the outcome of a DPRK defeat would be regime change, numerous unintended consequences to include rampant instability and a massive humanitarian crisis would occur.

At some point in this scenario the Kim Regime could decide to use nuclear weapons. The unpredictable nature of the regime, combined by the direness of the situation would likely result in nuclear weapon utilization. This detonation could be a crude or advanced weapon; in either case it would cause significant damage. The end goal of Kim Jong-un is survival, not the fitness of his people or nation; this is a challenging concept for people with a Western worldview, especially the American public to comprehend.<sup>69</sup> Since this scenario is likely to result in a nuclear weapon detonation, a significant post-nuclear clean-up, a migration crisis, an internal humanitarian crisis, and some form of response from either or both the PRC and Russia will be necessary.

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<sup>68</sup> Simon Denyer and Amanda Erickson, "**Beijing warns Pyongyang: You're on your own if you go after the United States**," *The Washington Post*, sec. National Security, 08/11/2017, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/china-warns-north-korea-youre-on-your-own-if-you-go-after-the-us/2017/08/11/a01a4396-7e68-11e7-9026-4a0a64977c92\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.ae2917c64186](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/china-warns-north-korea-youre-on-your-own-if-you-go-after-the-us/2017/08/11/a01a4396-7e68-11e7-9026-4a0a64977c92_story.html?utm_term=.ae2917c64186) (accessed 12/01/2017).

<sup>69</sup> Zachary Cohen, "**CIA: North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un Isn't Crazy**," CNN, October 05, 2017. <http://www.cnn.com/2017/10/05/politics/cia-kim-jong-un-intelligence-profile/index.html> (accessed 12/01/2017, 2017).



An option to lessen the malign unintended consequences of an armed conflict could be US support of the ROK from within the ROK's borders. If the US remained below the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel it might convince the PRC and Russia to remain neutral. This scenario would have to respect the interests, policies, and strategy of the PRC. As mentioned previously, when gaming this type of scenario which involves several sovereign states, seldom does one nation achieve all its objectives. The PRC, utilizing the international relations theory of realism, would seek some type of concession(s) to appease it from entering the conflict. Likely options would include the US departing the Korean Peninsula after the conflict, requests to alter the U.S. treaty with Taiwan, or a zone of separation where the US would remain below the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel.

The PRC is masterful at finding opportunities in all crises. This was evident during the 2001 Hainan Island incident when a People's Liberation Navy J-8III aircraft executed high risk maneuvers that led to a crash with a US Navy EP-3E.<sup>70</sup> The PRC seized the moment by ignoring the actions that directly led to the crash and focusing international attention on their possession of a U.S. aircrew and aircraft. They turned a bad incident into one that focused on the violation of their sovereignty.<sup>71</sup> Since possession is deemed nine-tenths of the law, the PRC found a way to flip the situation to focus on their sovereignty claims, with no regard to their lack of international recognition.

This use of propaganda was also evident in 1950 when the CCP used the Korean War to solidify their gains internally after their ouster of the ROC government, which fled to Taiwan in 1949. The presence of the US in the region, branded as an existential threat, enables the CCP to

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<sup>70</sup> Shirley A. Kan and others, "China-U.S. Aircraft Collision Incident of April 2001: Assessments and Policy Implications: RL30946," *Congressional Research Service: Report* (10/10, 2001), 7, <https://nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=24764193&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 23.



achieve its top national interest, its survival through harsh internal security controls.

Additionally, the CCP used the Korean and Vietnam Wars to win over the populace based on propaganda demonizing the US's involvement in both wars.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Stefanie Becker, "Cold War in Asia: China's Involvement in the Korean and Vietnam War" (Master of Arts, Kansas University), May 04, 2015, 26-52, [https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/bitstream/handle/1808/19013/Becker\\_ku\\_0099M\\_14077\\_DATA\\_1.pdf](https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/bitstream/handle/1808/19013/Becker_ku_0099M_14077_DATA_1.pdf) (accessed 12/02/2017).



## Part IV - Conclusion.

The scenarios in the previous chapter highlight that the PRC will seek some form of concessions, most likely the departure of the US from the Korean Peninsula, after any form of reunification. Those looking for an easy victory and executing mental shortcuts would view this a win-win. Under that logic, during a peaceful reunification, there is no need for a costly enduring U.S. presence on the Korean Peninsula. In this scenario the US and ROK may tire of paying the burden to base U.S. forces on the Korean Peninsula once the threats presented by the Kim Regime and nuclear-armed DPRK disappear.

It is essential to note that currently the ROK pays over \$800 million annually to maintain U.S. security posture within the ROK's sovereign borders.<sup>73</sup> Upon reunification, it is challenging to imagine a scenario where the ROK would maintain this arrangement. Furthermore, imagine the ROK maintaining this expense while simultaneously engaged in a costly long-term effort to build the former DPRK into a modern society.

A similar logic could apply to an enduring presence in Japan. Although the DPRK is not the only concern regarding the security of Japan; it currently serves as its greatest threat to security. Additionally, would Japan remain willing to foot ninety percent of the expense to keep U.S. forces stationed in Japan if the threat from Kim Regime ceased to exist? It is logical to imagine that shortly after reunification, political debates would commence domestically and internationally on whether it makes sense to maintain a costly U.S. presence in the region. Especially when the Korean Peninsula would be on a path to prosperity.

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<sup>73</sup> Louis Jacobson, "Donald Trump mostly Wrong that 'we Get Practically Nothing' from South Korea for U.S. Troop Presence," Politifact, January 10, 2016. <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2016/jan/10/donald-trump/donald-trump-mostly-wrong-we-get-practically-nothi/> (accessed 12/01/2017, 2017).



This logic of U.S. withdrawal from the region is shortsighted and extremely dangerous. It is transactional and ignores the outcomes from the Ways of Seeing and SWOT analysis. In the long-term, a US departure from the Korean Peninsula and Japan would put Taiwan and the South China Sea at risk. This outcome is a win-win for the PRC, it would make zero concessions while achieving all of its strategic ends. For the US this would serve as a win-lose outcome. This would yield a short-term victory that is tactical in its nature. This would serve as the equivalent of a “fool’s errand.” The loss would be long-term and strategic in its nature. This is akin to the US winning the tactical battle only to lose the war due to the lack of a clear strategic objective which is politically aligned with enduring national interests. This is exactly what happened in Vietnam, Operation Desert Storm/Shield, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan). Part of the challenge for the PRC is setting the conditions for this scenario to occur without directly acknowledging the long-term gains it would reap. This realization by Japan, the ROK, and US would lessen the PRC’s political capital in negotiating favorable outcomes.

Using post-Cold War Iraq as an example, envision the treasure and burden endured through two wars and twenty-five plus years of effort on the Arabian Peninsula. After a prolonged and costly effort, the only nation more powerful than they were at the start of that period is Iran, the US’s number one adversary and driver of instability in the region. When the US departed Iraq in 2011, Iran’s hidden influence and power in the region surfaced and grew rapidly. The US departure created a security void where Iran and eventually ISIS learned to thrive. This thesis aims to ensure the US never again makes such a shortsighted lapse in judgement. This type of uninformed decision-making risks US national interest, long-term security, and regional stability.



The US's ability to maintain security posture, especially basing, in the Asia Pacific region far outweighs short-term gains in what is currently the DPRK. The US should not accept any scenario where it departs the Korean Peninsula. It is extremely dangerous to ignore the PRC's endgame of pushing the US out of the region. No nation operating with all its faculties, should ever trade all their poker chips for a thoughtless transaction that yields nothing more than temporary gratification. Soon after such gratification, there would be a realization that US security posture in the region transitioned to a point of non-existence. This new balance of power would be costly and challenging to alter. This is exactly what happened in Europe after WWII when the USSR initiated political warfare against the US and its allies due to a security imbalance after the US's redeployment of forces. In the Asia Pacific scenario the US's immediate ability to counter threats in the region would be limited to only its global strike capability and any force temporarily in the region. A similar scenario is evolving today in Europe as a resurgent Russia seeks greater influence in the region. Prior to this resurgence the US experienced a steady decline in European basing from the early 1990s and well into the new millennium.

The US is clearly struggling to envision a grand strategy based on a continuum, where it wins the long-term competition regarding national interests and the maintenance of an advantageous position of influence in the Asia Pacific Region. Three key themes from recent debates highlight this matter. The first concern is US security posture in the Asia Pacific Region, most notably basing. Second, the 2016 Hague Tribunal Ruling on the South China Sea, and the US's lack of action after the decision. Third, the US's withdrawal in 2017 from the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) limits the ability to maintain influence in the region. All three issues signify a



lack of a concerted effort to achieve long-term gains tied to enduring national interests in the region.

The PRC is highly capable of setting the conditions for reunification on the Korean Peninsula. The DPRK cannot survive without PRC aid. Specifically, it has no access to global markets, finance, or energy. The PRC is the key variable that is keeping the Kim Regime afloat since the collapse of the USSR.

Earlier the analysis demonstrated that many forms of reunification, denuclearization, and regime change were all favorable to the PRC. The PRC is the only nation with ties to agents that could topple the Kim Regime internally followed by reunification and some form of sustainable peace. The PRC pays a burden to the DPRK based its desire to limit U.S. influence in the region.<sup>74</sup> The DPRK's crossing of the nuclear threshold has clearly changed the PRC's logic, for the first time they have agreed to UN concessions against the DPRK.<sup>75</sup>

This emergent behavior suggests the PRC may be ready to move past the Kim Regime, yet they still see unilateral action as a win-lose. This is akin to the U.S. conundrum where a short-term gain yields a long-term loss. If the PRC were to execute regime change or reunification, regardless of the cost, it must yield some form of gain which they deem amenable to their interests. The PRC clearly sees that occurring if the US departs the Korean Peninsula. The cost of occupying the DPRK is too great for the PRC to only yield modest gains. The PRC envisions the nuclear threat, to include radiation fallout and a subsequent refugee migration as significant risks. Therefore, they are likely to push for sanctions and a beneficial regime change

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<sup>74</sup> Eleanor Albert, "The China–North Korea Relationship," *The Council on Foreign Relations* (2017), <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-north-korea-relationship> (accessed 12/01/2017).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.



that does not disrupt the balance of power. Based on the Ways of Seeing model, reunifying the peninsula unilaterally does not yield a beneficial change to the balance of power from a PRC worldview.

The DPRK's achievement of nuclear power status has already forced the US, PRC, ROK, and Japan to deal with its effects. Much of the political world is in denial that the DPRK is a nuclear power. The denial focuses on the DPRK's lack of a sophisticated delivery method and miniaturization of warheads. The DPRK can clearly target U.S. citizens and troops on the Korean Peninsula without the use of intercontinental ballistic missiles. Additionally, the DPRK can deliver nuclear materials via unconventional means to anywhere in the world, the challenge would be escaping detection.

The question moving forward is what does the DPRK truly want to achieve with their nuclear power? They are already nuclear-armed and have not attacked the ROK, Japan, or the US. Is their nuclear ambition simply tied to deterrence and the long-term survival of the Kim Regime or some greater political end? The more time that passes without any form of DPRK nuclear attack, the less strength there is in the argument that they are achieving nuclear status to destroy the US, the ROK, or Japan. Time in this case favors the argument of regime stability through the deterrence provided by the stability-instability paradox. This scenario enhances the argument that a nuclear-armed DPRK is manageable and that the PRC is the key element of a better and lasting peace in the Asia Pacific.

DPRK aggression and nuclear ambitions are creating an environment where Japan is considering the need to alter their constitution to allow for expanded military capabilities. It may



be logical to further posit that Japan and the ROK would find it necessary to achieve nuclear power status in their efforts to defend against DPRK nuclear capabilities. Additionally, through the lens of the ROK and Japan, this may yield the deterrence explored earlier through the stability-instability paradox, with a net result of two more nations becoming nuclear-armed.

If Japan and the ROK do not decide to become nuclear powers in the future their dependence on the US will only grow. Their treaties with the US will serve as the only form of nuclear deterrence they can enforce upon the DPRK towards the defense of their nations.

For the PRC this scenario feeds the narrative that the US is creating an environment, through hostility towards the DPRK, where Japan and the ROK are forced to remain reliant on the US for their defense. Clearly the PRC is acrimonious towards the strength of the alliances the US shares with Japan and the ROK. This dependence may eventually yield an environment where the ROK finds enough common ground with Japan to become more forgiving of Japanese acts during their occupation of the Korean Peninsula from 1910 to 1945. This scenario may threaten the DPRK and PRC to a point where they change policy or strategy to place stress on such a relationship from forming a lasting relationship.

Moving forward, one should consider the opportunities highlighted in the Ways of Seeing and SWOT analysis. Five critical issues highlight common interests and flashpoints in the Asia Pacific, where the elements of national power, especially diplomacy, could set the conditions for long-term stability that benefits all nations. Those interests are 1) what nations can enter the DPRK in the event of a crisis or decision to denuclearize the Kim Regime, 2) how does the US leverage all scenarios to maximize security posture in the region, 3) how does the US influence sovereignty claims of the PRC and Taiwan, 4) how does the US influence freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, and lastly 5) how to leverage Japan's desire to change its constitution to



ensure a balance of power in the region. It is critical to note that the timeless proverb of “if you do not take a seat at the dinner table...you may be on the menu,” applies in all scenarios. Failure to engage or execute a grand strategy results in being picked-apart one mouthful at a time, over an extended period.

The opportunities to utilize all five critical issues as segues that resolve the Kim Conundrum are abundant. The US requires a grand strategy that seizes and influences opportunities as they arise in this complex region of the world. The frameworks and methods outlined earlier serve as a means where the US can identify emergence and adaptation in a manner where it positively influences outcomes based on enduring national interests.



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